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On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism: Problems with a Recent Attempt

Andrew Hollingsworth

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Abstract: In his recent book, *Simply Trinity*, Matthew Barrett argues that Christians need to retrieve the pro-Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, as articulated by the fathers in the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods of the church's history. He also argues that social trinitarianism is beyond the boundaries of pro-Nicene orthodoxy, and that many Christians today who have accepted some version or another of social trinitarianism have accepted a false Trinity. In this paper, I object to Barrett's characterization of social trinitarianism, arguing that he misrepresents the positions and agendas of several thinkers who identify as social trinitarians. I also argue that Barrett does not develop a clear argument demonstrating that social trinitarianism is unbiblical, nor does he develop a clear argument against the social-trinitarian views of those individuals that he lists and critiques. As a result, Barrett's critiques of social trinitariansism in *Simply Trinity* ultimately fall flat. I conclude with some practical steps for moving the discussions surrounding social trinitarianism forward.

Key Words: Doctrine of the Trinity, Social Trinitarianism, Trinity Models, Matthew Barrett

Introduction

The history of Christian doctrine is as much a history of theological critique as it is theological construction. At times, Christian authorities have voiced critical judgments of certain articulations of theological beliefs, such as those of the Arians—and rightly so. Sound doctrine is important to the health of the church, and critiques of doctrines such as Arianism are rightly warranted. However, it is also important in voicing theological critiques that the views being opposed receive their rightful due. Christians are called to be both critical *and* charitable—in appropriate season, and Christians can only be truly critical when they have accurately and charitably presented the view under discretion. Theological beliefs, especially those articulated and defended by others who aim to be faithful to Scripture and the Christian faith, should always be articulated accurately, critiqued rightly, and judged charitably.

Matthew Barrett recently has written a book on the doctrine of the Trinity—*Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit*.[1] In this book, he argues that Christians need to retrieve the pro-Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, as articulated by the fathers in the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods of the church's history. He also argues that social trinitarianism (ST) is beyond the boundaries of pro-Nicene orthodoxy, and that many Christians today who have accepted some version or another of ST have accepted a false Trinity.[2] However, his critiques and attacks do not always represent ST fairly. While ST might be novel in some of its theological and philosophical emphases, it has a reputation of being defended by many prominent Christian philosophers and theologians, many of whom consider themselves Evangelicals—such as William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland, Bruce Ware, William Hasker, Stanley Grenz, Millard Erickson, Thomas McCall,[3] and several others. Throughout the book, Barrett is also reluctant to fairly represent his ST interlocutors, several of whom I just mentioned. In what follows, I note several problems with Barrett's characterization of ST, namely that he misrepresents the positions and agendas of several thinkers who identify as social trinitarians. I also argue that Barrett does not develop a clear argument demonstrating that social trinitarianism is unbiblical, nor does he develop any clear arguments against the social-trinitarian views of those individuals that he lists and critiques. Again, ST is not given its rightful due, and, as a result, Barrett's critiques of ST in *Simply Trinity* fall flat.

This paper is divided into three major sections. In the first section, I summarize Barrett's descriptions of and challenges to ST. The material for this section is drawn primarily from chapter three of *Simply Trinity*, which is titled "Since When Did the Trinity Get Social? The Manipulated Trinity," though I will at times reference other portions of the book as well. I develop my critique of and argument against Barrett's critiques of ST in the second section of the paper. My critique here is multi-pronged: First, Barrett misrepresents the views of several of the social trinitarians he identifies in this chapter, particularly those whom he identifies as evangelical Christian philosophers. As a result, many of the critiques he lodges against ST do not apply

1. Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021).

2. This seems to be a gross overstatement. Even several non-social trinitarians recognize ST as a genuine possibility within the patristic tradition. See, for example, Adonis Vidu's comment on this in his book *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 116. Vidu goes on to discuss, at length, Swinburne's account of ST. Though he rejects that this account makes sufficient hermeneutical sense of the pertinent biblical texts for monotheism in the New Testament, he still acknowledges that "the possibility remains that one can give an account of ST which fulfills the fundamental conditions of monotheism."

3. McCall prefers to refer to his view as a "relational Trinity," by which he emphasizes that "the Father, Son, and Holy. Spirit live within a necessary relationship of mutual holy." Thomas H. McCall, "Relational Trinity: Creedal Perspective," *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 113.

to these thinkers or their ST models, and his arguments only further ambiguate the conversations being had over ST. I make particular use here of Thomas McCall's recent taxonomy of varieties of ST to help substantiate this critique. Second, Barrett never develops an explicit argument for why ST is unbiblical and should be avoided by contemporary theologians, and he assumes much of what should be argued for in so doing. I then conclude that important corrections need to be made to Barrett's characterizations of ST and social trinitarians, that he should develop explicit arguments for many of the premises that he assumes, and that he needs to deal with each ST model individually rather than ST generally. By dealing with each ST model individually, he could then better identify the form(s) of ST that are unorthodox and carefully develop arguments demonstrating that it (they) is (are) in fact unorthodox. I further conclude by outlining some practical steps that theologians and philosophers should take in order to move the discussions surrounding ST forward.

Barrett on Social Trinitarianism

Barrett explicates ST in chapter three of *Simply Trinity*. He minces no words pertaining to his thoughts on ST: it is a result of *Trinity drift* and is an unbiblical and unorthodox view of the Trinity. By *Trinity drift*, Barrett means the shift of modern theologians away from pro-Nicene trinitarianism into an unorthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Not only are these modern views of the Trinity unorthodox, but Barrett also claims that this redefining of the doctrine of the Trinity by moderns has given license to theologians to straightforwardly *manipulate* the Trinity. He sees this to be especially the case with ST. Barrett asks the question, "How did we get here?"

Barrett begins his narrative of Trinity drift with the age of the Enlightenment.[4] During the Enlightenment, reason was elevated above revelation in its authority, even for religious and theological matters. Anything that could not be proven by reason alone was either disregarded or considered less important. We see this in the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, whom many refer to as the father of protestant liberal theology. He provides one of Schleiermacher's more popular quotations on the Trinity: "According to Schleiermacher, the Trinity has 'no use in Christian doctrine.'"[5] Not only Schleiermacher, but many others during this time considered the doctrine of the Trinity to be speculation spurned on by philosophy and metaphysics foreign to the Christian faith. As a result, the doctrine of the Trinity was beyond the real concerns of the gospel, and many theologians during this time interpreted the gospel through the lens of morality. According to Barrett, "Some gave Liberalism a moralistic agenda like no other. Christianity does not concern itself with speculative dogmas like the Trinity but with the ethics of God's kingdom and how they transform

4. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 71.

5. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 73; compare Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 741.

society. The Trinity is irrelevant because it has nothing to contribute to society's moral advancement in Christian values."[6]

Once we move into the twentieth century, we see a shift in Christian theology, a shift to make the Trinity great again. More specifically, theologians sought to make the Trinity relevant, and they did so by allowing their Trinity doctrines to be determined by their social agendas.[7] Prior to the shift to ST, however, there already was a push to reclaim the relevance of the Trinity by the two Karls, Barth and Rahner. Barrett focuses primarily on Rahner and his claim that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.[8] Though several theologians interpret Rahner differently, Barrett notes Rahner's emphasis on God's revelation in the economic Trinity and his identifying this with the immanent Trinity. As a result, claims Barrett, Rahner "gave modern theologians the opportunity to rethink everything, and most importantly, to close the gap between Creator and creature."[9]

According to Barrett, the Trinity becomes social after Barth and Rahner, particularly in the works of Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, and Leonardo Boff. In Moltmann, claims Barrett, we see the Trinity doctrine reformulated for explicit social concerns. Moltmann was critical of Barth and Rahner for their emphasis on the oneness of God, which he thought led to the dangers of monotheism and potentially Sabellianism.[10] These views lead to monarchy and patriarchy, which are unacceptable for society. Rather, Moltmann desired an egalitarian Trinity, one in which there was no subordination or monarchy, only equality and democracy. In Moltmann's words, "I have developed a social doctrine of the Trinity, according to which God is a community of Father, Son, and Spirit, whose unity is constituted by mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpenetration."[11] By making the Trinity social, "Moltmann now has the solution for the evils that plague society."[12] Social causes such as feminism and liberation movements can now find their grounding in the being of God as an egalitarian community. Not only this, but Moltmann also emphasizes the attribute of God's love far over and above the attribute of his power. Per Barrett, "While power is the weapon of the one ruler over the oppressed in society (what he [Moltmann] calls monotheistic Monarchianism), love is the medicine that restores community, both in God and in society. What kind of community, you ask? A *socialist* community."[13]

6. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 73.

7. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 74.

8. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 75–76; compare Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1997), 22.

9. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 77.

10. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 78; also see. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16, 77–79, 144–48.

11. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, viii, emphasis removed.

12. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 79.

13. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 80, emphasis original.

Moltmann is not alone in allowing a social agenda to drive his doctrinal revisions. Miroslav Volf does the same, claims Barrett. "Volf is just as convinced that the historic doctrine of the Trinity must be modified or even rejected, at least if the Trinity is to serve as a model for church and society, which it must. The Trinity, in some sense at least, is to be our social program."[14] Like Moltmann, he argues for a trinitarian community grounded in equality rather than hierarchy, and such is to be the model for the church's polity.[15] Leonardo Boff similarly lets his social agenda motivate him to redefine the Trinity doctrine. Whereas Volf envisions the Trinity being the social program for the church, Boff sees it as the social program for politics as well.[16] In order to accomplish this, Boff redefines "persons" in light of modern understandings of personhood, which, Barrett claims, are very different from how ancient Christians understood personhood.[17] On this view, persons are understood as individual centers of consciousness, will, and emotion, and who exist in relationships with others.[18] Boff applies this understanding of personhood to the Trinity and claims that the Trinity is "society and a community."[19] According to Barrett, "Such community means there is 'total reciprocity' between the Father, Son, and Spirit, a 'loving relationship' one to another."[20] This society of the divine persons that Boff has in mind "condemns capitalist societies," and becomes the motivation for liberation movements, specifically socialistic liberation movements.[21]

Barrett then moves on to discuss ST models that focus on historicizing the Trinity. He focuses on the models of Hans Frei and Robert Jenson in particular. What we see in both figures' work is an emphasis on narrative, particularly the biblical narrative. Specifically, the Bible focuses on the works of God in history rather than his being apart from history (and creation). While commending Frei on drawing attention to the biblical narrative, Barrett critiques Frei for focusing "*merely* on narrative."[22] He further claims, "As a result, he has ignored other parts of Scripture—including other narratives!—that tell us who God is apart from humanity."[23] The problem with this, claims Barrett, is that "we humanize God by *merely* focusing on history, losing

14. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 81; compare Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 403–423.

15. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 81.

16. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 82.

17. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 82; compare Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (New York: Orbis, 1988), 115.

18. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 82.

19. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 83, emphasis removed.

20. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 83; compare Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 133.

21. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 84–85.

22. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 87, emphasis original.

23. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 87.

patience, as Frei does, with any and all discussions about the immanent Trinity."[24] Jenson, on the other hand, seems to completely historicize God.[25] In Barrett's words, "The eternal relations of origin . . . are not timeless and immutable, fixed to be what they are apart from creation. No, what the triune God does in history *constitutes* who he is in eternity. The relations *become* relations as they take place within creation. The persons of the Trinity are, in a real sense, *temporal*."[26] The problem with this, claims Barrett, is that it reduces, or collapses, the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity and reduces the Trinity "to the gospel, and its [the Trinity's] identity collapsed into the history of salvation."[27]

Finally, Barrett looks at how even evangelical philosophers and theologians and "New Calvinists" have even been willing to adopt ST. For the former, he highlights primarily the work of J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, and he highlights the work of Stanley Grenz for the latter. Many Christian philosophers, such as Moreland and Craig, have no problem doing away with the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS): "With such an emphasis on distinct wills and centers of consciousness, the historic Nicene affirmation of simplicity will just not do anymore. . . . If simplicity is affirmed in any sense, it must be 'modest,' and it must conform to a social view of the persons."[28] While Barrett correctly points out that these evangelical Christian philosophers emphasize that each person is its own distinct center of consciousness, will, and love, he does not point out that they do not connect the Trinity to any sort of social agenda, which is significant. I will say more on why this is significant below.

For Stanley Grenz, it is important to affirm a social Trinity because it is important to affirm that love is the most fundamental attribute of God, which requires distinct agents. According to Barrett, Grenz affirms that "we must define the persons as those who pursue eternal love relationships with one another."[29] Barrett identifies Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem as examples of "New Calvinists" who have accepted ST.

24. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 88.

25. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 88.

26. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 88, italics original; compare. Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.64; and Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 126.

27. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 89.

28. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 90; compare J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), chapter 31; William Lane Craig, "Toward a Tenable Social Trinitarianism," in *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Thomas McCall and Michael C. Rae, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 89–99; and William Lane Craig, "Another Glance at Trinity Monotheism," in *Philosophical and Theological Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Thomas McCall and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 126–30.

29. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91; cf. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), chapters 2, 3, and 13; Stanley J. Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); and Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the* Imago Dei (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

Unlike other social trinitarians, however, Ware and Grudem "believe this society of relationships in the Trinity is defined by functional hierarchy."[30] This view is known as *eternal functional subordination* (EFS).[31] According to EFS, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Spirit is subordinate to the Father and Son, but these subordination relationships are functional rather than ontological.[32] Barrett further notes that those who affirm EFS, such as Ware and Grudem, also have a strong social agenda: "Their social agenda comes through just as strong, if not stronger, than social trinitarians before them, when they then argue that authority-submission inside the Trinity, within the eternal Godhead, is the paradigm and prototype for hierarchy in society, especially wives submitting to their husbands in the home."[33] Barrett also claims that this EFS version of ST is a form of historicizing ST, much like Frei and Jenson, because it ultimately seems to collapse the immanent and economic trinities.[34]

Barrett concludes this chapter in *Simply Trinity* by claiming that these various forms of ST are only "the tip of the social Trinity iceberg."[35] Such a view of the Trinity is now so widespread that many might even think that there has been a Trinity renaissance rather than a Trinity drift. However, ST, he argues, is not consistent either with what the Bible teaches or the pro-Nicene tradition. Modern theologians who would accept some version of ST, he even argues, are ultimately not concerned with the appropriate contemplation of God in himself: "With the arrival of the twenty-first century, it's now conspicuous that there are as many Trinities as modern theologians. With each new Trinity arrives a new social program. Quests for the Trinity are in the end not about God but about *me* and *my* social agenda."[36] He concludes the chapter

30. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91.

31. Some prefer to refer to EFS as the *eternal relations of authority and subordination* (ERAS).

32. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91; cf. Barrett does not provide any citations to Ware's or Grudem's respective works in this chapter, though he provides many citations to their work, particularly Ware's, in chapter 8, where he engages their EFS projects at length. For Ware's and Grudem's positions on EFS, the reader may reference the following sources: Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 248–52, and Appendix 6; Wayne Grudem, "Biblical Evidence for the Eternal Submission of the Son to the Father," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 223–61; Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); Bruce A. Ware, "Does Affirming an Eternal Authority-Submission Relationship in the Trinity Entail a Denial of *Homoousios*? A Response to Millard Erickson and Tom McCall," in *One God in Three Persons: Unity of Essence, Distinction of Persons, Implications for Life*, ed. Bruce Ware and John Starke (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 237–48; Bruce A. Ware, "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 13–37.

33. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91.

34. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91.

35. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 91.

36. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 92. Barrett cites Matthew Levering to support this claim, and

with the following statement: "*Trinity drift is real*. We have not only drifted away from the biblical, orthodox Trinity, but we have manipulated the Trinity to meet our social agendas."[37]

Problems for Barrett's Critiques of Social Trinitarianism

Throughout chapter three in his book, Barrett identifies various scholars who are well known as social trinitarians, and he even attempts to provide some nuance to their views. For example, while both Moltmann and Ware understand the divine persons as distinct centers of consciousness and will, their respective ST projects are very different. As a matter of fact, one will notice several notable differences between the distinct ST projects that Barrett has identified in his book. This raises an important question about what constitutes ST. In other words, what are the necessary conditions that a doctrine of the Trinity must meet in order to be considered ST? Barrett provides the following definition of ST in the glossary of his book:

> Social trinitarianism is a diverse movement, which makes it difficult to define. But in its fully developed form, it's starting point (or at least emphasis) is not simplicity—some reject simplicity—but the three persons. The Trinity is not defined primarily by *eternal relations of origin*. ST redefines the Trinity as a society and community analogous to a human society, redefines the persons as three centers of consciousness/will, redefines persons according to their relation*ships* (focus on mutuality, societal interaction), and redefines unity as interpersonal relationships of love between persons (redefinition of perichoresis). ST collapses [the] immanent and economic Trinity, sets East against West, and treats [the] social Trinity as a paradigm for social theory (ecclesiology, politics, gender). ST has been adopted by modern theologians but is an abandonment/revision of Nicene orthodoxy.[38]

Since this definition comes from his Glossary in the book, I presume that it is what Barrett has in mind at any point in the book where he discusses ST. However, many readers may wonder, after reading this definition, if this is an accurate representation of the necessary conditions for a view to be considered ST. In fact, many of the thinkers that Barrett identifies as social trinitarians do not represent all the criteria that he lists. For example, both Richard Swinburne and William Hasker are social

Levering draws his claim from the work of Karen Kilby. See Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 236; and Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 442. One should note that this claim is demonstrably false, and I point to this in this next section of the paper.

37. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 93.

38. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 324.

trinitarians, and they both affirm the eternal relations of origin.[39] Typically, a *definition* aims to describe the minimal locutionary units necessary to describe the essential properties of a term or concept, i.e. what are the necessary conditions for something to be properly identified with that particular term or concept. Barrett's provided definition of ST, especially in light of his chapter dedicated to the subject, does not seem to really represent what ST is.

In his recent book, *Analytic Christology and the Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, Thomas McCall gives ample discussion to what exactly ST might be.[40] He draws specific attention to the fact that the term ST is used in such a unique number of ways that the term has lost most, if not all, of its definitional import. He notes seven various ways that ST often is used in the contemporary theological literature.[41] Due to the vast usages of the term, McCall actually recommends that the term either be dropped from usage altogether or used only to refer to what he calls "real social trinitarianism."[42] Barrett's usage of ST combines six of the seven uses listed by McCall, namely "socio-political advocacy,"[43] "Eastern vs Western theology,"[44] "theology that employs the social analogy,"[45] "theology that makes use

39. As a result, the reader should note that ST does not hinge on one accepting or rejecting the eternal relations of origin. Social trinitarians are split on this issue.

40. Thomas H. McCall, *Analytic Christology and the Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 137–76.

41. McCall, *Analytic. Christology*, 141–50.

42. McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 149–50. McCall claims that "real social trinitarianism" is a conjunction of the following claims:

> (R-ST1) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are 'of one essence,' but are not numerically the same substance. Rather, the divine persons are consubstantial only in the sense that they share the divine nature in common. Furthermore, this sharing of a common nature can be understood in a fairly straightforward sense via the 'social analogy' in which Peter, James, and John share human nature;
>
> (R-ST2) Properly understood, the central claim of monotheism that there is but one God is to [be] understood as the claim that there is one divine nature—not as the claim that there is exactly one divine substance;
>
> and (R-ST3) The divine persons must each be in full possession of the divine nature and in some particular relation R to one another for Trinitarianism to count as monotheism (where the usual candidates for R are being members of the same kind, the only members of the divine family, the only members of a necessarily existent community, enjoying perfect love and harmony of will, and being necessarily interdependent).

43. "*Christian theology that seeks to draw socio-political and ethical implications from the doctrine of the Trinity.*" McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 141; italics original.

44. "Social Trinitarianism = df. *the doctrine of the Trinity that was held by the major pro-Nicene Greek-speaking theologians of the fourth century (especially Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil of Caesarea), particularly where that doctrine is distinct from the 'Latin' or 'Western' theology (especially exemplified by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas).*" McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 142; italics original.

45. "*Trinitarian theology that makes positive use of the social analogy; God is relevantly and*

of the 'modern notion' of person,"[46] "intra-Trinitarian love,"[47] and "distinct agency."[48] One can see something very unique here. The seven uses of ST that McCall lists each represents a particular version of ST, or some doctrine of the Trinity that is called ST by the one who holds the view. In other words, we see seven *distinct* usages of the term according to McCall. Barrett's definition, on the other hand, describes ST *as a conjunction* of the six uses from McCall listed above.[49] Indeed, his definition results in a lengthy list of necessary conditions for a view of the Trinity to be considered ST.

So, what is my reason for pointing out this distinction in ways of approaching the meaning of ST as exemplified by Barrett and McCall? My reason is this: Barrett's definition of ST does not neatly map on, or at all in some cases, to those whom he lists and describes as social trinitarians. According to Barrett, for example, a necessary condition for a doctrine of the Trinity to be considered ST is that it claims that the Trinity is "a paradigm for social theory."[50] However, several of the social trinitarians that he lists do not affirm this or even mention it in their respective works on the subject. The most obvious example of this is the work of J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, which Barrett identifies as ST. While Moreland and Craig do refer to the triune persons as distinct centers of consciousness and will—McCall's "modern notion of person"—they make no mention of any idea of the Trinity being a paradigm for social theory, nor do they mention the Father, Son, and Spirit loving one another (though I doubt that they would deny that the persons do love one another in the intra-trinitarian life), and they do not use any social analogies to describe the Trinity.[51] While Moreland and Craig openly affirm that their view of the Trinity is ST, what they call ST is distinct from what Barrett calls ST. But as far as Barrett is concerned, Moltmann, Jenson, Boff, and Moreland and Craig all belong together. However, it is decidedly not the case that Moreland and Craig affirm a view of the Trinity shared by these others. Does Moreland and Craig's view affirm *some* particular claims

importantly like three human persons." McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 144; italics original.

46. "*Trinitarian theology that makes positive use of modern (as opposed to traditional) concepts of personhood*." McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 145; italics original.

47. "*Any doctrine of the Trinity according to which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love one another within the intra-trinitarian divine life (the 'immanent Trinity')*." McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 148; italics original.

48. "*Any doctrine of the Trinity according to which the divine persons are distinct in agency*." McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 148; italics original.

49. I by no means intend to claim that Barrett has intentionally drawn from McCall's book, nor do I intend to claim that Barrett should have engaged or drawn from McCall's book. This would be near impossible since only two months separate the public release of each book, McCall's being the latter of the two. I make recourse here to McCall's recent book since his list of uses of the term ST serves a useful heuristic tool for not only discussing ST but for evaluating other definitions/uses of ST as well, such as Barrett's.

50. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 324.

51. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 582: "The central commitment of social trinitarianism is that in God there are three distinct centers of self-consciousness, each with its proper intellect and will."

that are also affirmed by Moltmann, Jenson, Boff, and others? Sure; all of these thinkers would affirm that the persons are distinct centers of consciousness and will, for example. But this would be just about all that they would agree on, along with perhaps the claim that the divine persons love one another.

By placing all the components that he does in his definition of ST, Barrett in essence claims that each of these components is a necessary condition for a view of the Trinity to be ST. However, as just shown, several theologians and philosophers who identify as social trinitarians hold notably different beliefs about the Trinity. So, there are a couple of possible implications that follow from this phenomenon: 1) Barrett's definition for ST is false, or 2) it is false that all of the thinkers identified as social trinitarians by Barrett are actually social trinitarians; perhaps some have even misidentified themselves. It cannot be the case that Barrett's definition of ST is true and that all of the philosophers and theologians that he identifies as social trinitarians are actually social trinitarians, since his definition would exclude several of these. It seems to me that 1 is likely the case.

The reason that I think Barrett's definition for ST is false is this: It requires too many necessary conditions to be met for a particular Trinity doctrine to be considered ST. However, I need to clarify a particular point of agreement that I have with Barrett: Barrett *is correct* to identify all of the theologians and philosophers he labels as social trinitarians that he does. Moreland and Craig are obviously social trinitarians; they claim this to be the case. However, as I already stated, they are not of the same social-trinitarian variety as Boff, Moltmann, et al. If it is the case that Barrett is correct in identifying these thinkers as social trinitarians, but these thinkers' Trinity views have such notable differences as they do, then ST must be less or something other than what Barrett claims it is.

Some might quibble that I am making much to do over semantics. I do not take this to be the case. When Barrett critiques ST, he applies his criticisms to everyone that he pulls together under the umbrella of his definition for ST. But as I have demonstrated, not everyone he pulls under this umbrella fits under it. This entails that some, if not most, of Barrett's criticisms of ST do not land for these outside the umbrella. As a result, Barrett's criticisms are not aimed at ST per se, only particular versions of ST. Since this is the case, then his cumulative argument against ST is severely weakened.

Barrett's most-often repeated criticism of ST is that those affirming the view do so for the sake of advancing their social agendas: "With each new Trinity arrives a new social program. Quests for the Trinity are in the end not about God but about *me* and *my* social agenda."[52] He asserts this again: "*Trinity drift is real*. We have not only drifted away from the biblical, orthodox Trinity, but we have manipulated the Trinity to meet our social agendas."[53] This is not to say that this is Barrett's only criticism of

52. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 92. Italics original.
53. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 93. Italics original.

ST—he also notes that the pro-Nicene patristic theologians did not conceive of the persons as distinct centers of consciousness and will, and this is arguably the case—though it is highly contested by various philosophers and theologians.[54] But it is his primary criticism of ST throughout *Simply Trinity*. Since not all professed social trinitarians attempt to modify the doctrine of the Trinity to advance a social agenda, this particular critique of Barrett's has zero implications for their trinitarian models. Perhaps the criticism that their models lack any patristic or medieval support hits the bullseye, but the significance of this critique will vary depending on a number of items, such as how one interprets the patristic and medieval sources.[55] The weight of any critique against ST, however, will hinge on which version of ST one is talking about. Again, definitions matter.

One may wonder what, if any, argument is a sound argument against ST. This, again, depends on how one defines their terms. Is there a common core, or essence, of ST? Are there any necessary conditions that are met by all who claim ST? Perhaps, but I think McCall's observations about the vast variety of usages of the term and the problems created therein are correct. Even if one adopts his definition of "real ST"[56] as their definition of ST in general, this still will exclude many who claim the social trinitarian moniker, such as those who ascribe distinct agency to the divine persons but do not describe them as a society or describe any sort of intra-Trinitarian love. Perhaps McCall is correct that ST has lost any sort of consensus concerning its definitional import, though, as he highlights, the term is unlikely to drop out of usage. Regardless, this sheds ample light on the problems with Barrett's description and subsequent criticisms of ST. Because of the particular way that he defines ST, he further muddies the waters surrounding the conversations and debates over it. This point is not only a weakness in Barrett's argument, but an actual problem. Good arguments should disambiguate philosophical and theological problems; ideally, they transform these problems into pseudo-problems. If some arguments further ambiguate a problem, then those are bad arguments, and Barrett's arguments and the premises they are based on do just that. If Barrett desires to continue his project of critiquing ST, then he needs to provide a more accurate and precise definition of what ST is, and he needs to avoid equivocation. Otherwise, his arguments will continue to fall short, and he will continue to ambiguate the important conversations being had over models of the Trinity.

54. See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*; and Holmes, *Quest for the Trinity*, 56–146. Not everyone is agreed on this, however. See Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*, 7–49; and Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 582–85.

55. For example, Hasker makes positive arguments that some form of proto-ST by both Gregory of Nysa and Augustine of Hippo. While many theologians have argued that the Cappadocians might represent something like a proto-ST (though this also is highly contested), very few have argued that Augustine qualifies as one. See Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*, 26–49, esp. 44–49.

56. See footnote 42 above.

The last problem that I want to discuss with Barrett's critique of ST is that much of what he presumes is precisely that for which he needs to argue. More specifically, he presumes 1) that the church's tradition has adopted the correct hermeneutical approach for the theological interpretation of Scripture, 2) that the tradition holds a particular authority in theological method and doctrinal development, and 3) that the tradition has articulated not only a doctrine of the Trinity that enjoys biblical warrant but one that is internally coherent. I will briefly address each of these presumptions individually.

Barrett does not question the hermeneutic approach of the early or church or its validity. Though he discusses this approach at length in chapter 2, "Can We Trust the God of Our Fathers? Retrieving Biblical Orthodoxy," he never really engages the concerns of many who would disagree with it. The majority of this chapter is dedicated to re-telling the Arian and Eunomian controversies and how the orthodox doctrine of God was defended, reaffirmed, and triumphant over the heresies of Arius and other dissenters.[57] However, Barrett never really discusses or argues for *why* the tradition, its hermeneutic, and its trinitarian conclusions are on solid ground; he merely asserts and assumes that this just is the case. Focusing on the final line of the Nicene Creed, he writes, "It is universal *because* it is holy and apostolic. The fathers are claiming, in other words, that this Trinity they confess is none other than the Trinity of the Scriptures, the same Scriptures penned by the apostles. For that reason, the creed carries authority in the church, not just the church of the fourth century but the church *universal*, across all lands and spanning all eras, East and West."[58] He further writes, "That said, the Nicene Creed is not a dead letter; rather, it carries authority to this day. No, it is not on par with Scripture; it is not a source of divine revelation. But since it conforms to Scripture, it is to be adhered to, confessed, and celebrated in the church to this day. *To part from the creed is to depart from scriptural teaching itself.*"[59] This is a very bold claim!

First, one should notice that Barrett's statements here do not constitute an argument; they are just assertions. Simply saying something boldly and repeating it several times is not an argument. Also, these statements are not some conclusion to an argument that he has been making throughout the chapter; they are his summary thoughts on his telling of the story of Nicaea. He merely asserts these claims and then concludes his chapter, after which he begins his critique of ST in the next chapter. If anything, these statements serve as presuppositions from which he develops this

57. It is worth noting, however, as does Paul Gavrilyuk, that many of the ancient heretics, namely the Arians and the Nestorians, were beholden to many of the tenets of classical theism, such as divine simplicity and impassability, which seem to have contributed to their trinitarian and Christological heresies. See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "God's Impassible Suffering in the Flesh: The Promise of Paradoxical Christology," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 142–43.

58. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 65.

59. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 65–66. Italics original.

critique of ST. Presuppositions are beliefs from which one argues rather than ones to which one argues. Sure, everyone has presuppositions when they articulate or defend any particular view; however, Barrett's use of these particular presuppositions seems to be a case of cheating of some sorts. By presupposing the truth of these statements, he has stacked the deck, so to say, in his favor; he is baking the conclusions for which he is arguing into his metaphorical cake. One of his major critiques of ST, for example, is that it departs from the historic doctrine of the Trinity, but in so making this critique he presumes the truthfulness of the historic doctrine of the Trinity without considering whether it is possible that the patristic fathers might have erred in how they interpreted Scripture. Since Scripture is the highest theological authority for the Christian, according to Barrett, is it not reasonable then to submit the patristic interpretations of Scripture on the Trinity to Scripture itself and see if these interpretations actually conform to what Scripture teaches? I believe so, and I think Barrett himself would agree, but he nowhere does this. If one is going to argue for a particular view of the Trinity as the correct view, as well as the patristic hermeneutics used to derive this view, then they cannot begin by presuming the truth of the position they aim to defend, nor can they begin by presuming the falsity of the views they aim to critique. These truth values are items that need to be argued for rather than from.

Connected to this is my second point mentioned, that Barrett presumes that the tradition holds a particular authority in theological method and doctrinal development. As mentioned, Barrett affirms *sola Scriptura*, which claims that Scripture is the supreme authority in all matters of Christian doctrine; it does not claim that Scripture is the only authority or that no other source can deliver true theological or doctrinal beliefs. However, Barrett presumes, as noted in the prior critique, that Scripture should be interpreted through the lens, or hermeneutical framework, of the tradition; this is the way in which one will properly interpret Scripture and arrive at the correct doctrine of the Trinity. Not only does this presuppose—without defense—that the tradition is a hermeneutical authority when it comes to reading Scripture, but it also is not obvious that Barrett's views here do not undermine some of the pragmatics of *sola Scriptura*. For example, John Peckham has pointed out, by elevating the tradition to the needed lens for rightly interpreting Scripture, one has functionally placed the tradition on an equal level of authority as Scripture itself. How can Scripture hold doctrinal authority over the tradition and potentially critique and correct the tradition if Scripture must always be interpreted through the tradition? It cannot, according to Peckham.[60] Again, this qualifies as stacking the deck by presupposing exactly that for which Barrett should argue. The authority of the tradition in matters hermeneutical and theological is an item that needs to be argued for and defended, which Barrett has not done. At minimum, he should at least consider the logic of views such as Peckham's in order to alleviate concerns such as this concerning *sola Scriptura*. Not

60. Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 132–36; Peckham, *Divine Attributes*, 29–37, and 209–48.

only this, but suppose that the historical doctrine of the Trinity was determined to be incoherent; should Christians still believe it or read Scripture in the same way? It does not matter how impressive of a pedigree that a particular idea or doctrine has; if it entails logical incoherence then Christians should abandon that doctrine. I want to emphasize, however, that *I am not claiming that the traditional doctrine of the Trinity is false, nor am I claiming that the tradition got all of its hermeneutics wrong.* Rather, I am claiming that, following the way Barrett has set up his project, he has implicitly precluded the possibility of the traditional Trinity doctrine being false. My critique is a methodological one.

Lastly, by presuming the hermeneutical approach of the early church and that the tradition has authority over theological and doctrinal development, Barrett consequently presumes that this particular view of the Trinity both enjoys biblical warrant and logical coherence. However, this is not a consensus view in contemporary Christian theology or Christian philosophy. As Barrett himself notes, many Christians do not adhere to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. However, Barrett never explains why this is problematic except for his repeated claims that these trinitarianisms fall outside of what the tradition has affirmed. As a result, he presumes that they are necessarily false. But surely it is not the case that they are *necessarily* false. I already mentioned that Barrett never argues for or defends the view he insists upon in his treatment; rather, he presumes its truth value. As a result, he never investigates the exegetical or logical arguments that his opponents develop for their respective social-trinitarian views. Nowhere does he show where these thinkers went wrong in their exegesis or in their reasoning. The closest he comes is to making a claim similar to this: These thinkers approach the Bible with a naïve biblicism that does not consider the robust hermeneutics and deep reasoning of the tradition.[61] But again, this presumes precisely what he should argue for. If the tradition's approach to biblical hermeneutics and doctrinal development is superior to those practiced by contemporary theologians and philosophers, then should not Barrett demonstrate why? Again, he never does so. Is it not possible that the critics of this classical trinitarianism have made exegetical and coherent arguments for their view, ones that enjoy more biblical warrant than does Barrett's? If this is possible, then why not engage in a close analysis to see if they have done so? If these opponents have erred in their interpretation of Scripture, then surely it would be beneficial to point out where they went wrong.

Not only does Barrett never explore the exegetical and logical arguments many use for ST, he also never explores the exegetical and logical arguments against his preferred Trinity doctrine. Nowhere does he engage with the numerous critiques of classical trinitariansism that appear in the contemporary philosophical or theological literature, such as those offered by William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburne, William Hasker, or others. Simply put, this is unacceptable on scholarly standards. Though

61. Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, 36.

Barrett intends *Simply Trinity* to be a book for popular and lay audiences, he does his readers no favors by not introducing them to the critiques of the view on which he so strongly insists. Rather, the readers of *Simply Trinity* are left to assume that ST is necessarily an unbiblical view of God that does not enjoy any robust exegetical or logical arguments, and such is not a charitable presentation of an opposing view. If ST is a genuine problem for the Christian faith, then more work needs to be done at the exegetical and logical-analysis levels, showing how and why this is the case. Simply repeating that such a view is contrary to what the tradition has affirmed will not suffice.

Conclusion and Going Forward

I have argued that there are several problems with Matthew Barrett's recent critiques of ST in his recent book, *Simply Trinity*. First, Barrett furthers ambiguity of what ST is due to his problematic definition of the term, which results in him misrepresenting the views of several of the theologians and philosophers he discusses. Second, Barrett presumes much of what he should argue for in his arguments against ST. Specifically, he presumes the validity of the tradition's hermeneutic approach to Scripture and the truthfulness of its trinitarian conclusions; he presumes that the tradition holds a particular authority in theological method and doctrinal development, a presumption that is not shared by many other philosophers and theologians; and he presumes that his particular view of the Trinity both enjoys biblical warrant and logical coherence. Barrett's arguments all hinge on his definition of ST and all of the presumptions from which he develops these arguments. Since these items do all of his heavy lifting for him, Barrett instead should argue for and defend these premises before arguing from them. Otherwise, a vicious circularity will continue to result in his case falling flat on its face. Because of the vicious circularity that arises from Barrett's presumptions in his case against ST, I conclude that his case makes no real contribution to the discussions surrounding models of the Trinity or to the wider trinitarian discussions at large. This is not to say that there are not good arguments against ST on offer. As a matter of fact, there are several arguments against ST that have helped move trinitarian discussions forward, such as those provided by Brian Leftow, Carl Mosser, and Dale Tuggy, though I will not comment on how effective these arguments may or may not be. My purpose in this paper has not been to argue for or against ST or classical trinitarianism—I do not take a position on any particular Trinity model in this paper; rather, my purpose has been to identify the notable problems that plague Barrett's case against ST, problems that should not be ignored since Barrett considers ST to be a form of heterodoxy.

To further conclude this paper, I would like to outline some steps that I think useful for further engaging critiques of Trinity models in general, and ST models in particular. First, clear and accurate definitions are of first importance. If accurate

definitions are not provided, then straw man fallacies are likely to abound. This, however, is particularly difficult pertaining to ST since, as McCall demonstrates, ST is difficult to define and pin down. As McCall notes, critics and supporters of ST need to provide clear definitions for what they mean by ST. However, I think a more foundational step is needed, and this step perhaps needs to be taken by social trinitarians themselves. McCall's taxonomy is particularly useful for identifying different uses of the ST term. However, what is needed is a *mere* ST. Currently, there does not seem to be any agreement on what the requirements are for a minimalistic ST. Is there anything that all of the STs discussed by McCall have in common? Though this is likely controversial, I recommend that what McCall terms *modern-person ST* (M-ST) would work well for a *mere ST*.[62] However, following McCall's lead, I would suggest that the term "modern" be replaced with another adjective—perhaps "robust."[63] As he notes, how exactly "modern" this view of personhood is is a topic of debate. But if there is anything that the various ST models provided in McCall's taxonomy *seem* to have in common, it is that the divine persons are distinct centers of consciousness and will. It seems to me, however, that none of the other varieties of ST make much sense if the divine persons are not understood as such distinct centers of operation. For example, the "distinct agency" view of ST (D-ST per McCall), would seem to make little sense if the agents were not also centers of consciousness and will, and I would add intentionality. Could a living agent be an agent without a distinct center of consciousness, will, and intentionality? [64] It is not clear to me that this is the case, though some might be prone to argue that it is. One very well could argue that, though the divine persons are not distinct centers of consciousness, will, and intentionality, they are distinct agents. However, it is not clear, on this definition, what would set ST apart from classical models of the Trinity. Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas, for example, all seem prone to affirm that the divine persons are distinct agents who act, though they are not distinct centers of operations. If this were the case, then it would not be clear what distinguishes ST as a different Trinity model. As a result, I think M-ST is the best candidate for a mere ST.

In so adopting M-ST as a mere ST, one would also do well to heed McCall's suggestion about the labels of so-called "modern" theories of personhood and "traditional" theories of personhood. He writes, "This won't work all that well

62. I depart from McCall here as he notes that some trinitarian theologians attempt to use their doctrine of the Trinity to correct modern notions of personhood, and that not all claiming ST would claim such a view of persons. He cites Colin Gunton as an example on this. In other words, M-ST, according to McCall, does not work descriptively. Nonetheless, M-ST still seems to be what all other ST models hold in common in so far that ST is a distinguishable model of the Trinity. See McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 145.

63. Moreland and Craig use this adjective for personhood in *Philosophical Foundations* (586).

64. Broadly defined, "An agent is a being with the capacity to act, and 'agency' denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity." See Schlosser, Markus, "Agency," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/agency/>.

prescriptively, for it isn't an entirely simple matter to so easily oppose 'modern' notions to 'the traditional' concept. Just as there isn't a single thing called 'the modern view,' neither is there a single thing called 'the traditional perspective.'"[65] He notes that not even all of the medieval scholastics agreed on the definition of "person." "Thomas Aquinas," he notes, "opts for what is basically a Boethian notion of person as 'individual substance of a rational nature' (*persona est individua substantia rationalis naturae*). Meanwhile, Richard of St. Victor is well aware of Boethius's definition but is not at all hesitant to disagree with it. Famously, he holds that a divine person is an 'incommunicable existence of a divine nature' (*persona divina est divinae naturae incommunicabilis existential*)."[66] Not only this, but the differences between so-called modern and traditional theories of personhood are often exaggerated. Just because there seem to be differences between these views does not mean that there has been any sort of significant departure in the modern from the traditional. Rather, the differences could be explained simply as developments.[67]

Presuming that M-ST would qualify as a mere ST, critics and defenders of ST could then begin to make further progress in the discussion surrounding it. Many of the critiques that Barrett levels against ST, for example, would not hold any weight against this mere ST. However, his—and others'—argument that this sort of view was absent from the patristic and medieval theologians' Trinity doctrines could still hold weight, and defenders of this mere ST would still need to work out a good defense against this charge, especially if the charge should obtain.

When critics of ST bring up this charge of ST being inconsistent with what the tradition has taught, however, they need to demonstrate *why* the tradition should be considered authoritative in theological method and doctrinal development. Specifically, traditionalists need to demonstrate why, for example, the tradition should be considered as more authoritative than reason and argumentation. Not only this, but—and this critique is more specific to protestant critics of ST—critiques of ST need also to demonstrate why ST is not consistent with what Scripture teaches about God. Many have demonstrated how the tradition's interpretations of Scripture are plausible, but arguments demonstrating that ST readings of Scripture fail have been either 1) non-existent or 2) severely underdeveloped. For example, some might argue that ST is not consistent with biblical monotheism. But as McCall has shown, a biblical monotheism, such as articulated by Richard Bauckham, is not necessarily at odds with ST.[68] More work needs to be done on this sort of argument against ST.

65. McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 145. Italics original.

66. McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 145–46.

67. McCall, *Analytic Christology*, 146–47. See also Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 153; and Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 106.

68. Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?: Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 59–64,

Arguments for why ST is inconsistent with what Scripture itself teaches would be a great place for ST critics to begin, especially ST's evangelical critics.[69]

234–35; Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified*, in *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 1–59.

69. I would like to thank the blind reviewers and the editors at *The Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies*, particularly Joshua Farris and Ryan Brandt, for their invaluable feedback on this paper. I also would like to thank Jordan Steffaniak and Christopher Woznicki for their helpful comments and suggestions on this paper prior to my submitting it for review. All of the comments and feedback helped me strengthen my arguments and polish this paper.

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On Critiquing "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism": A Response to Andrew Hollingsworth

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Abstract: This brief essay is a response to Andrew Hollingsworth's article, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism: Problems with a Recent Attempt." In his article, Hollingsworth canvases Matthew Barrett's third chapter in Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit, which surveys the recent history of social trinitarianism, describing its major figures and their divergence (or, "drift") from the historic and orthodox trinitarianism of Nicaea. Hollingsworth argues that Barrett's critique fails on account of (a) inadequate engagement with the proponents of social trinitarianism he names, (b) an inadequate definition of social trinitarianism, and (c) inadequate justification for his presuppositions regarding the relative authority of tradition on hermeneutics and dogmatics. In this essay, I will argue that each of these criticisms fail when we consider (a) the nature of Simply Trinity, (b) Simply Trinity's third chapter in the context of the book as a whole, and (c) the way tradition has functioned—and continues to function—for the faithful orthodox throughout history. This latter contextual consideration challenges where Hollingsworth presumes the burden of proof lies regarding a Protestant adoption of Nicene orthodoxy in light of sola scriptura.

Key Terms: Doctrine of the Trinity, Social Trinitarianism, Trinity Models, Classical Theism, Tradition, Matthew Barrett, Sola Scriptura, Andrew Hollingsworth

Introduction

Andrew Hollingsworth has paid Matthew Barrett a great compliment in his article, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism: Problems with a Recent Attempt,"[1] which

1. Andrew Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism: Problems with a Recent Attempt," *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 7.2 (2023): 195-213.

interacts at great length with Barrett's book, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit*.[2] Hollingsworth renders his compliment simply by virtue of respecting Barrett enough to carefully read his work and engage it with vigor. Such an article, in my estimation (and in the estimation of the *JBTS* editors), deserves attention. This brief essay will serve as a response to Hollingsworth's article. I do not pretend to be exhaustive in my response; I hope rather to be broad without being reductionistic. We begin with intent. The best paragraph of his article is the first one. I do not say this to denigrate the rest of Hollingsworth's article, of course, but simply to praise what he says about the importance of right-minded theological debate: "Christians are called to be both critical *and* charitable," says Hollingsworth, "and Christians can only be truly critical when they have accurately and charitably presented the view under discretion. Theological beliefs, especially those articulated and defended by others who aim to be faithful to Scripture and the Christian faith, should always be articulated accurately, critiqued rightly, and judged charitably."[3] I could not agree more with these comments. Hollingsworth provides his introductory paragraph as a rationale for his engagement with Barrett, and I refer to it here as a rationale for my engagement with Hollingsworth.

As the title of his article suggests, Hollingsworth is not concerned with all aspects of *Simply Trinity*, but rather those parts of the book wherein social trinitarianism (ST) fall under Barrett's criticism. The main burden of his article is to argue that Barrett's critiques of ST fall short. There are many issues Hollingsworth raises in his article worth extensive attention. Unfortunately, the most interesting (and, I would say, most *important*) issues he raises occupy the least amount of space in his piece. I am thinking particularly of the question regarding the Christian tradition's role in hermeneutics and theological methodology, as well as the question of what it looks like to meaningfully affirm *sola scriptura*—these concerns Hollingsworth raises toward the end of his piece, and are by no means the primary burden of his paper. So, while I am most interested in these issues, it is incumbent upon me to first sort out Hollingsworth's earlier and primary criticisms of Barrett's work, which are that Barrett's critique of ST fails on account of (a) inadequate engagement with the proponents of ST he names, (b) an inadequate definition of ST, and (c) inadequate justification for his presuppositions regarding the relative authority of tradition.

Hollingsworth's Summary of *Simply Trinity*

To begin, I would like to address Hollingsworth's assessment of Barrett's work. The first half of his article, wherein he simply summarizes the content of Barrett's third chapter in *Simply Trinity*, is good. Hollingsworth does a fine job at restating

2. Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2021).

3. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 195.

the central claim of this chapter, which is that ST represents a departure from the traditional orthodox understanding of the Trinity—what Barrett calls "Trinity drift." So, in terms of the initial work of canvasing the layout of the chapter in question, there is little to say: Hollingsworth ably portrays Barrett's concerns. But what of his critical engagement with the content of *Simply Trinity's* third chapter? Sadly, in failing to adequately situate this chapter within the book as a whole contextually, Hollingsworth begins to falter.

If my students remember anything about my feedback on their work, it is likely my golden rule for book reviews: *critique the book you are reading, not the book you wish you had read*. In other words, a good book review should not critique a book for falling short of achieving a goal it was never intended to meet (even if the reader *wishes* it had); this is not a mark against it, and should not be treated as if it were. To keep from breaking the golden rule in this case, we need to bear in mind what chapter 3 is doing in *Simply Trinity*, and what the project, as a whole, is after. Though *Simply Trinity* contains polemical sections throughout (not the least of which is the chapter in question), our assessment will be amiss from the very beginning if we do not bear in mind that this book is a positive proposal before it is anything else. To state the matter plainly, *Simply Trinity* is not primarily a polemic against ST; this is a secondary feature in service to the primary one, which is *the commendation of Nicene trinitarianism*. From the opening chapter to the conclusion, Barrett makes this primary purpose clear. He does not merely want for his readers to avoid becoming social trinitarians, he wants for them to become Nicene-affirming trinitarians.

This has important implications for the role of *Simply Trinity's* third chapter. To focus exclusively on a secondary point is not *necessarily* a problem. But prerequisite the ability to analyze the secondary point accurately is the recognition of its service to the primary one. Treating the secondary point of a work as if it were its primary point is to fail to treat it with accuracy. If the book is a constructive work that requires some justification, chapter 3 explains why such a justification is required. The heart of the book is in the later chapters, which Hollingsworth does not mention. Of course, as just mentioned, Hollingsworth's lack of interaction with those chapters is not a problem by default. In this case, however, Hollingsworth's silence about the work as a whole bespeaks a problem with the sections he *does* interact with. At times, he treats *Simply Trinity* as if it were an academic treatise, aimed at social trinitarians with the purpose of debate and persuasion, instead of what it actually is: an introduction to the classical doctrine of the Trinity for a lay audience.

Criticism-Misfires

We may understand Barrett's survey of ST in chapter 3 *of Simply Trinity* as a kind of pre-emptive answer to the question the latter portions of the book—those portions close to the heart of his project—will inevitably raise for the average reader:

"Why does *this* way of thinking about the Trinity feel so strange? Why is Barrett's description of the Trinity so different from the typical way we talk about the Trinity today?" The answer that chapter 3 provides us with is something to the effect of, "*This*, the way this book talks about the Trinity, historically speaking, *is* the 'typical' way of talking about the Trinity. What we are used to is the exception to the rule. Our norm is the historic oddity. Let me tell you how we arrived to this place, where what was normal for countless Christians throughout the ages has become unfamiliar: *Trinity drift*." The brief survey of ST in chapter 3 is merely the ground-clearing work for the constructive work that is the central goal of *Simply Trinity.*

This is precisely where Hollingsworth breaks the golden rule I describe above. Hollingsworth continually faults Barrett for his minimal engagement with the social trinitarians he names (i.e., Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, Leonardo Boff, Hans Frei, J. P. Moreland, William Lane Craig, etc.). Hollingsworth writes, "Nowhere does he engage with the numerous critiques of classical trinitarianism that appear in the contemporary philosophical or theological literature, such as those offered by William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburn, William Hasker, or others."[4] Granted, if Barrett were writing a book that proposed to definitively debunk ST in a scholarly manner, this criticism would hold serious weight. For such a book, the amount of attention Barrett gives to these figures would be nothing short of negligible. But that is *not* the book that Barrett wrote. Hollingsworth appears to miss this crucial point when he concludes, "Simply put, this is unacceptable on scholarly standards."[5] To which we might reply, "This is quite right, and entirely beside the point." Such a comment is akin to reading a short piece in the opinions column of a newspaper and saying, "this is unacceptable on investigative journalism standards."

In a trade-level book that is already over three hundred pages long (possibly *too* long for a trade-level book in the estimation of some), and which does not advertise itself *primarily* as a criticism of ST, Hollingsworth faults Barrett for surveying ST rather than delving deep into the works of its individual figures. It seems that for *Simply Trinity* to meet Hollingsworth's expectation for adequate engagement with these figures, Barrett would have been required not only to write a different book, but indeed, a different *kind* of book. There simply is no room for the kind of engagement Hollingsworth is asking for here in a trade-level book that is not even written to be a full-fledged survey and critique of ST. The kind of engagement he is looking for here would actually be *inappropriate* for *Simply Trinity,* given its genre and central thrust—it would be a profound distraction and entirely ineffective at reaching its readership. (Those with publishing experience will note: no trade-level publisher would publish the type of book Hollingsworth demands; the fact that Baker Books published three hundred and sixty-four pages on a subject as difficult as classical trinitarianism is remarkable). Hollingsworth's criticism on this front nearly amounts

4. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 209.
5. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 209.

to the delegitimization of surveys and summaries. Is there any place for popular-level summaries of theology and its historical development in service to another goal? Should Baker abandon its "BakerBooks" imprint and stick exclusively to "Baker Academic"?[6]

The above, however, is not Hollingsworth's primary objection to Barrett. Rather, he is most concerned with Barrett's definition of ST. According to Hollingsworth, Barrett's definition "requires too many necessary conditions to be met for a particular Trinity doctrine to be considered ST."[7] Hollingsworth worries that Barrett is forced to place into the same category figures who differ in significant degrees, such that their differences are not given their proper due. The definition Hollingsworth interacts with is found in the glossary at the end of *Simply Trinity*, and it is also laid out in neat, itemized fashion within the book itself.[8] Hollingsworth is quick to point out Barrett's forthrightness regarding the notorious difficulty of defining ST: it is like trying to "nail Jell-O to the wall." Indeed, Barrett's explicit definition *begins* on this note of diversity: "Social trinitarianism is diverse, and some versions are more radical than others, but most hold some or all of the following eight marks in common."[9] Here are those marks,

> (1) Starting point is not simplicity, but three persons… (2) Trinity is redefined as a society and community… (3) Persons are redefined as three centers of consciousness and will, (4) Persons are redefined according to their relation*ships*… (5) Unity is redefined as interpersonal relationships of love between persons… (6) Large overlap (sometimes collapse) of immanent and economic Trinity, (7) Sets East over West… (8) Social Trinity is a paradigm for social theory.[10]

Again, Barrett qualifies that not every form of ST can be characterized by every one of these marks; he writes in general terms here. Hollingsworth grants that Barrett makes this qualification one moment, but he appears to ignore it the next. For example, he gives great attention to the fact that some social trinitarians—such as Thomas H. McCall, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland—lack many of the

6. Hollingsworth is not only mistaken about the type of book Barrett has written, but he misses the point of Barrett's "survey" as well. Theologians in the last century thought they experienced a renaissance, but in truth they became enamored with a different (social) trinity altogether. This is an observation made not only by Barrett but by Lewis Ayres in *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009). Chapter 3 of *Simply Trinity,* therefore, is not a "survey" per se but a look at our recent past to wake us up so that we do not think social trinitarianism *is* Nicene trinitarianism. To miss the purpose of chapter 3 with such a criticism is like reading Stephen Holmes' book *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2012) and thinking he is merely giving a historical "survey."

7. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 205.

8. *Simply Trinity*, 86.

9. *Simply Trinity,* 86.

10. *Simply Trinity*, 86.

eight marks in Barrett's definition. But, respectfully, this amounts to Hollingsworth identifying several names that highlight the importance of Barrett's qualifications of "most" and "many." At the risk of redundancy, the point to emphasize is that Barrett says, explicitly, "*most*" versions of ST "hold to *some* or all of the eight marks," which provides plenty of space for the figures above to fit the description. It is difficult to see how figures like McCall and Craig, by virtue of their failure to embody all eight marks in the definition of above, demonstrate the inadequacy of Barrett's definition—especially when Barrett's definition *includes* the allowance of an ST that lacks all eight marks—but Hollingsworth seems to think this is the case. This is made apparent in his misguided assumption that "Barrett in essence claims that each of these components is a *necessary condition* for a view of the Trinity to be ST."[11] This is simply not true. Not only does Hollingsworth project implicit intent on Barrett inaccurately, he positively denies that Barrett's definition includes the nuance that Barrett explicitly *does* include. By missing (or possibly even *ignoring*) these qualifications, Hollingsworth seems to imagine that Barrett's whole project rises or falls on every social trinitarian's rigid and exhaustive adherence to all eight marks of his definition (which is manifestly not the case).

Moreover, Hollingsworth fails to pay attention to one of the main contributions of the chapter: although major fathers of social trinitarianism (e.g., Moltmann) are more radical than evangelicals (a qualification Barrett *does* make), evangelicals have been influenced by some of the major tenets of social trinitarianism. Again, if chapter 3 is read in context, Hollingsworth might have noticed how Barrett begins his book with the shocking discovery that evangelicals have been quick to abandon eternal generation. Barrett's point is not that evangelicals have embraced every tenet of social trinitarianism, but they have breathed in the air of social trinitarianism, and serious consequences have followed. In other words, Barrett explains evangelicalism's drift from Nicaea not by appealing to a wholesale adoption of social trinitarianism but to social trinitarianism's *influence* on evangelicalism, however great or small. Barrett is not concerned primarily with whether every individual has succumbed to a point-by-point adoption of social trinitarianism but whether there has been a paradigm shift in any degree.

These misjudgments of Hollingsworth call attention to what is perhaps the greatest shortcoming of his article. Hollingsworth appears to think that Barrett's greatest objection to ST is the way it is *used* (i.e., as a social program for ecclesiology, or politics, or gender relations, etc.). So, he assumes that by citing the example of social trinitarians who do not *use* their ST in these various ways, Barrett's argument falls apart. But Barrett's primary objection to ST is *not* the way it is used; the various inappropriate uses of the Trinity in most forms of ST are only symptoms of its greater erroneous program. *The primary objection to ST is that it runs the risk of tritheism*. Or, to take the argument a step forward, the primary objection to ST is that *it is*

11. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 205. *Emphasis added*.

non-Nicene. This is where keeping chapter 3 in its larger context is very important. The reader will not fully appreciate the gravity of the "Trinity drift" described in chapter 3 until he reaches chapters five, six, seven, and eight. That's when the *primary* objection to ST—i.e., its dangerous proximity to tritheism—becomes most apparent. Thus, we can grant Hollingsworth's proposal for a *mere* ST—in which we define it simply as positing three distinct centers of will and consciousness in the godhead—and *Simply Trinity's* main criticisms against it still stand. In this way, Hollingsworth does not accomplish what he sets out to accomplish in his critique. What makes ST so repugnant to Barrett is not that it is political, but rather that it is a clear departure from the trinitarianism of Nicaea.

Such a significant misjudgment on Hollingsworth's part explains his neglect of one of Barrett's primary concerns across the book; indeed, it is in the title itself: the recovery of the Trinity's *simplicity* over against three centers of consciousness and will. Hollingsworth does not seem aware of the importance of Barrett's repeated warning against *conflation* between the immanent and economic Trinity, a warning embodied by Barrett's repeated concern that simplicity has been forfeited and substituted for a social unity that looks more human than divine. Furthermore, when Hollingsworth misses Barrett's main criticism—namely, social trinitarianism risks tritheism and drifts from Nicene trinitarianism—Hollingsworth also overlooks not only Barrett's primary point but Barrett's alignment with other Nicene historians and theologians today who make the same argument, such as Keith Johnson, Lewis Ayres, Matthew Levering, Stephen Holmes, among many others. Barrett even underlines this primary objection to social trinitarianism when he concludes chapter 3 itself with this sobering quote from Holmes' book *The Quest for the Trinity:* "I see the twentieth-century renewal of Trinitarian theology as depending in large part on concepts and ideas that cannot be found in patristic, medieval, or Reformation accounts of the doctrine of the Trinity. In some cases, indeed, they are points explicitly and energetically repudiated as erroneous—even occasionally as formally heretical—by the earlier tradition."[12] For *this* primary reason, Barrett says we are experiencing Trinity drift.[13]

Concluding Thoughts on Interpretation and the Authority of Tradition

Of course, objecting to ST on the grounds that it is non-Nicene brings us back to Hollingsworth's concluding remarks, which I mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

12. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity,* 3.

13. Keith Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Stephen Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

Judging from the concluding section of his paper, we might suspect Hollingsworth to respond at this point by granting that Barrett objects to ST on the grounds that it is non-Nicene, and then citing this as evidence for Barrett's tendency to assume what he ought to prove. Who says our doctrine of the Trinity should be Nicene to begin with? How do we know the fathers were right in their handling of the biblical text? Are we minimizing our commitment to *sola scriptura* by privileging the Nicene tradition in its exegesis? There are a couple of things we can say by way of response.

To begin, we should remember that Protestant theologians, going all the way back to the Reformation itself, have insisted on privileging the early ecumenical creeds and councils regarding Trinitarianism, Theology Proper, and Christology precisely *because* those codified statements are, in their estimation, faithful to the Scriptures. In other words, the Nicene Creed has historically been understood by Protestants to be authoritative by derivation; it derives its authority from the Scriptures. The claim that Barrett and others in this "classical camp" make is that the pro-Nicene Fathers' trinitarianism should be adopted for no other reason than that their trinitarianism is *biblical.* Their exegesis still holds up: that is the claim. On this note, we should make the simple observation that Barrett, in *Simply Trinity*, *does* in fact provide biblical and exegetical reasons for assuming that the Nicene Creed should be regarded as a faithful articulation of the Scriptures—particularly in chapters 4-10 which Hollingsworth leaves out of his analysis. Indeed, the exegesis of all those chapters is preceded by the title, "How do we find our way home?", a title that says to the reader, "Barrett is now going to explain why Nicene trinitarianism *is* biblical." In this way, Barrett implicitly argues for the exegetical inferiority of ST's approach to the Scriptures by setting on display the exegetical superiority of the tradition's handling of the Scriptures.[14]

14. Granted, these arguments are not intended to take academic form, but that takes us back to the earlier observation about the nature of *Simply Trinity.* For more scholarly takes that argue in harmony with Barrett, see: D. Glenn Butner Jr., *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018); Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity and the Bible: On Theological Interpretation* (Bellingham, WA: 2021); Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain (eds.) *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), particularly Scott R. Swain's chapter, "The Radiance of the Father's Glory: Eternal Generation, the Divine Names, and Biblical Interpretation," Matthew Y. Emerson's chapter, "The Role of Proverbs 8: Eternal Generation and Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern," Madison N. Pierce's chapter, "Hebrews 1 and the Son Begotten 'Today'"; and Michael F. Bird and Scott Harrower (eds.), *Trinity Without Hierarchy: Reclaiming Nicene Orthodoxy in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Academic, 2019), particularly Madison N. Pierce's chapter, "Trinity without Taxis? A Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 11," Amy Peeler's chapter, "What Does 'Father' Mean? Trinity without Tiers in the Epistle to the Hebrews," and Ian Paul's chapter, "The Trinitarian Dynamic in the Book of Revelation." Additional support can be found in the following recent volumes: D. Glenn Butner Jr., *Trinitarian Dogmatics: Exploring the Grammar of the Christian Conception of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022) and R.B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022).

Regarding the relative authority of the tradition, Hollingsworth is right to explain how chapter 2 of *Simply Trinity* "is dedicated to re-telling the Arian and Eunomian controversies and how the orthodox doctrine of God was defended, reaffirmed, and triumphant over the heresies of Arius and other dissenters."[15] Surprisingly, however, Hollingsworth goes on to object that "Barrett never really discusses or argues for *why* the tradition, its hermeneutic, and its trinitarian conclusions are on solid ground; he merely asserts and assumes that this just is the case."[16] In one sense, this is very true. Barrett does seem to presuppose that the exegesis that successfully defended the orthodox doctrine of God against the Arian and Eunomian heresies does not need elaborate justification. But this is because Barrett assumes an evangelical readership will consider "the orthodox doctrine of God" a desirable enough outcome. If providing a successful defense of the Trinity against Arian and Eunomian attacks does not qualify the Nicene fathers' theological and hermeneutical method as standing on "solid ground," what would? It is technically true that Barrett presupposes the sufficiency of such an appeal for lay-evangelicals who ostensibly desire to be historically orthodox, without arguing *why* evangelicals should desire to be historically orthodox, but I would think that such a presupposition is a fair one.

Furthermore, Hollingsworth once again fails to read a chapter in the context of the *entire* book; chapters 4-10 of *Simply Trinity* do not move past Nicaea but demonstrate the legitimacy of Nicaea's claims. To say, as Hollingsworth does, that chapter 2 merely asserts but does not evidence Nicene trinitarianism is strange, even shortsighted, especially since the rest of the book exemplifies Nicaea's exegetical, theological, and philosophical logic. In chapter 2, for example, Barrett asserts the patristic affirmation of simplicity in the patristic attempt to explain the Son's equality to the Father, only for Barrett to dedicate all of chapter 5 to a defense of simplicity's biblical and theological credibility. Barrett does the same with eternal generation, eternal spiration, and inseparable operations. In fact, eternal generation receives two whole chapters, one of which is entirely devoted to the doctrine's *biblical* warrant (chapter 7). In doing so, Barrett fulfills his promise at the start of the book when he says evangelicals have been dismissive of eternal generation and his book will display a "mosaic" of biblical imagery to recover the doctrine. Hollingsworth's claim that Barrett has "cheated" by merely asserting Nicaea's beliefs is baffling considering the next two hundred pages of *Simply Trinity* are devoted to demonstrating Nicaea's coherence.

This all raises another question. Does Hollingsworth *not* think that the historical conception of the Trinity is correct? Many social trinitarians, particularly of the

15. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 207.
16. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 207.

evangelical variety, insist on rejecting Nicene hermeneutics whilst maintaining a Nicene articulation of the Trinity. *We all wish to confess the Nicene and historic Trinity; we simply differ on how to define, articulate, and defend the doctrine*—this is how the argument typically goes. However, Hollingsworth seems to wonder if either (i.e., Nicene hermeneutics *or* Nicene trinitarianism) are necessary or desirable. If this is the case, Hollingsworth deserves commendation for his honesty and consistency, but the question nevertheless remains: if it is not the historic doctrine of the Trinity Hollingsworth is after, how can the conception he *does* want be considered *Christian* in any historically meaningful sense? If such a Trinity *is* a departure from what Christians throughout history have meant by the word, "Trinity," how would such a conception not constitute as a radical redefinition? Note, I am *not* necessarily charging Hollingsworth with departing from the Christian tradition or subscribing to a sub-Christian definition of the Trinity, (he does, after all, pose these challenges in the form of *questions,* and I do not wish to read too much into them); I am merely raising a question of definition. What does the word "Trinity" mean if our definition is not resourced by history? While Hollingsworth wonders why the tradition should be privileged in its hermeneutic and its fruit (i.e., *Nicene* trinitarianism), I am wondering what the alternative is, save a trinitarianism that redefines the term altogether.[17]

In light of his article, we might expect Hollingsworth to retort that the alternative may simply be a more biblically faithful conception; a conception that takes *sola scriptura* more seriously. Hollingsworth seems to imply nothing less when he suggests that Barrett's embrace of the tradition as a hermeneutical authority undermines "some of the pragmatics of *sola scriptura*."[18] Of course, such an undermining act would refer to the Reformers themselves. To be clear, if Barrett's appropriation of the tradition as a subordinate—though hermeneutically consequential—authority under the Scriptures undermines the pragmatics of *sola scriptura*, the very historic architects and articulators of *sola scriptura* undermined the doctrine they defended.[19] This would mean that either they did not think their own doctrinal convictions through, or that Hollingsworth (along with R. T. Mullins, whom he cites on this

17. Stephen Holmes has argued similarly that the definition of "Trinity" is nothing if not a historical exploration: "I might attempt to prove that the doctrine of unconditional election is false from the Scriptures, but I cannot prove that it is not a proper tenet of Calvinism by exegesis [because that is a historical question, not an exegetical one]. In exactly the same way, I can try to prove that a position, be it EFS, or confession of the *filioque,* or inseparable operations, or divine simplicity, is right by appeal to Scripture, but I cannot necessarily, prove that a position is trinitarian by the same procedure. *That judgement can only ever be arrived at historically.*" Stephen R. Holmes, "Classical Trinitarianism and Eternal Functional Subordination: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections," in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2017), 95–96 (emphasis mine). I am grateful to Jacob Rainwater for calling my attention to this article.

18. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 208.

19. This point is even made by Barrett himself in his book, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Barrett is clearly in support of *sola scriptura* but warns against *solo scriptura.*

point) misunderstands *sola scriptura,* loading it with "pragmatic" consequences that are alien to its essence. The Reformers did not resolve the tension between *sola scriptura* and their privileging of the Creeds not because they were blind to the problem, but because there was, in fact, no tension to begin with. Additionally, one can argue that the existence and relative authority of creeds and confessions does not undermine a doctrine of *sola scriptura* in the slightest because the creation of creeds and confessions—which function as guardrails to protect the deposit of the faith once for all delivered to the saints—has a biblical rationale.[20]

The foregoing calls our attention, finally, to the question of where the burden of proof lies regarding hermeneutics and the tradition's role therein. While it is easy to opine about the authority of Scripture in the abstract, at some point, we have to adopt some kind of hermeneutical grid. Barrett insists that the best hermeneutical grid—and the one that yields historically orthodox trinitarian doctrine—is the same one the Nicene Fathers used.[21] This, we would argue, is the proper use of the *rule of faith*.[22] Historically, the *rule of faith* has been the general stress-test used to determine the orthodoxy of a doctrine. Of course, we are talking in generalities here, and the edges are not razor sharp. How much do I need to agree with Athanasius's exegesis on every biblical doctrine to be considered orthodox? There are degrees to this principle, but the fact of degree alone does not annihilate the coherence of this notion we might refer to as *historical precedent*. The fact is, if we do not take something like *the rule of faith* or "the Great Tradition" into account when judging the validity of a theological method or biblical interpretation, we must adopt something else. A naked appeal to Scripture will not do, because it is the legitimacy of Scriptural interpretation that is in question (after all, Athanasius and Arius cited the same proof-texts). What, then, is left but the judgment of individuals?

There is a kind of affirmation of biblical authority that, in the name of freeing the Scriptures from the tyrannical authority of a tradition, subjects the Scriptures to the no-less tyrannical authority of the *individual*. To be clear, I am not here accusing Hollingsworth of committing the grave and hubris subjugation of the Scriptures to his individual whims. I merely bring this point up to ask: if one chooses to reject the

20. J. V. Fesko argues this very point in *The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020).

21. Craig A Carter argues this point in *Interpreting the Scriptures with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

22. For more on the "rule of faith" and its harmony with *sola scriptura,* see Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 49–116; Timothy George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011); Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1530–1725,* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); Ian Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture,* (Waco: Baylor, 2017); Paul Hartog, "The 'Rule of Faith' and Patristic Biblical Exegesis," *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2007); Richard Muller, *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

relative authority of the tradition with the use of the "rule of faith," what is to keep one from becoming a judge unto oneself? To whom *are* his orthodox *bona fides* held accountable if not to the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church?" According to Hollingsworth, "traditionalists need to demonstrate why, for example, the tradition should be considered as more authoritative than reason and argumentation."[23] But "traditionalists" (as Hollingsworth calls them) need to do nothing of the kind. To frame the matter this way is to pose a false choice. Traditionalists insist that the tradition is reasonable and stands up to argumentation. Its authority persists precisely *because* of its reasonableness and faithfulness to the Scriptures. Hollingsworth imagines Barrett merely appeals to the tradition as if it were authoritative over and against the real work of biblical exegesis, reasoning, and argumentation. But could not the re-presentation of the tradition's solid exegesis, reasoning, and argumentation merely *look* to Hollingsworth like an a-critical appeal to tradition, when it is actually simply a hearty agreement with the tradition? What if the exegesis of the tradition still holds up? What if Barrett does not merely repeat the arguments of the tradition because he treats their word as more authoritative than the Scriptures, but rather because those arguments were faithful to the Scriptures and simply have not yet been beaten?[24]

23. Hollingsworth, "On Critiquing Social Trinitarianism," 212.

24. I am grateful for the feedback I received on this essay from my Doktorvater, Matthew Barrett, and my colleague at Gulf Theological Seminary, Adam Brown. Both of these men contributed very helpful insights, and I owe them my thanks.

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A Philosophical Analysis of J. R. Daniel Kirk's *A Man Attested by God*

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Abstract: In his recent book, *A Man Attested by God*, J. R. Daniel Kirk argues that the Synoptic Gospels are best read through a paradigm in which Jesus is not a divine person, but rather an exalted non-preexistent human person. In what follows I set out Kirk's argumentation in a precise logical structure, then assess it from a logical and philosophical point of view. My conclusion is mixed. The logical structure of Kirk's argumentation against the Divine paradigm is good. If the texts he marshals against his early high Christology opponents are exegeted correctly—I give no assessment of Kirk's historical or exegetical work—then he has succeeded in showing that his opponents' arguments are in dire shape. On the other hand, Kirk's own argumentation in favor of the Ideal Human paradigm is itself lacking in an essential component–—he does not support a necessary part of that paradigm, Christ's alleged nonpreexistence.

Keywords: Divine paradigm, Ideal Human Figure paradigm, Early High Christology, The Synoptic Gospels, Preexistence.

Introduction

In his recent book, *A Man Attested by God*, J. R. Daniel Kirk argues that the Synoptic Gospels are best read through a paradigm in which Jesus is not a divine person, but rather an exalted, non-preexistent human person. Given the burgeoning recent literature arguing for a high Christology in Scripture, one can expect numerous responses that take up the historical and textual grounds that Kirk provides for his thesis.[1] What one might not expect, and something that many would likely find

1. See, for instance, Richard Bauckham *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, Edition Unstated (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Simon Gathercole *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006); Richard B. Hays *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, reprint ed. (Baylor University Press, 2016); Larry Hurtado *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 3rd ed. (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2015); Andrew Loke *The Origin of Divine Christology*, Reprint edition (Cambridge University Press, 2019); Thomas H. McCall, *Analytic Christology and the Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, 2021; and Kavin Rowe *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

helpful, is a response from a philosophical point of view, focusing on the logical justification of the premises and inferences that Kirk offers. For it could be that the history and exegesis are flawless, and yet not logically connected to the conclusion in the right sort of way so as to derive his fundamental thesis. In fact, a lack of the proper logical connectivity between premises and conclusion is precisely what I argue herein.

In what follows I first articulate the argumentative work of J. R. Daniel Kirk's *A Man Attested by God*. To do so I define some important terms—Ideal Human Figure, Ideal Human Figure paradigm, and Divine paradigm—then discuss their interrelations. Next, I assess Kirk's argumentation against a Divine paradigm of the Synoptic Gospels. Finally, I assess Kirk's argumentation for an Ideal Human Figure paradigm of those same Gospels. My conclusion is mixed. The logical structure of Kirk's argumentation against the Divine paradigm is good. If the texts he marshals against his early high Christology opponents are exegeted correctly—I give no assessment of Kirk's historical or exegetical work—then he has succeeded in showing that his opponents' arguments are in need of bolstering. On the other hand, Kirk's own argumentation in favor of the Ideal Human Figure paradigm is itself lacking—he does not support an essential component of that paradigm, Christ's alleged non-preexistence.

The Argumentation in General, Key Definitions, and Their Interrelations

Kirk's goal in this book is to show that the Ideal Human Figure paradigm of the Synoptic Gospels fits the evidence in those Gospels better than the Divine paradigm that is common in the contemporary literature on those Gospels.[2] Proving this thesis takes on both a positive and a negative valence, which makes sense: to show that theory 1 fits the evidence better than theory 2, one good approach is both to show just how well theory 1 fits the evidence and also just how poorly theory 2 fits the evidence. In fact, Kirk lists these two projects—showing problems with the Divine paradigm and showing the justification for the Ideal Human Figure paradigm—as the two main purposes of the book.[3]

Before presenting his argumentation against the Divine paradigm and his argumentation for the Ideal Human Figure paradigm, we do well to get clear on what exactly each paradigm requires. Kirk presents his definition of an idealized human figure as follows:

2. J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels*, Reprint edition (Eerdmans, 2018), 581.

3. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 2, compare 42.

Idealized Human Figures: "Non-angelic, non-preexistent human beings, of the past, present, or anticipated future, who are depicted in textual or other artifacts as playing some unique role in representing God to the rest of the created realm, or in representing some aspect of the created realm before God."[4]

Kirk elaborates on what it means to be "non-preexistent" in a later footnote, where he writes, "By 'non-preexistent' I mean that the human in view had no heavenly existence prior to a first appearance on earth."[5] The *Idealized Human Figure paradigm* is, in this context, a paradigm of interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels upon which Jesus is an idealized human figure, in the above technical sense. The *Divine paradigm*, sometimes referred to in the book as "divine Christology" or "high Christology," is, in this context, a paradigm of interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels that "depicts Jesus approaching, or attaining to, the status of the God of Israel."[6]

Concerning the interrelations between these two paradigms, Kirk says that he is not arguing that idealized human Christologies are inconsistent with divine Christologies.[7] And he says that idealized human figure Christologies do "not eliminate the possibility that Jesus is (being depicted as) divine."[8] I find these claims perplexing, given a seemingly universally accepted premise: If something is divine, then it preexists its first appearance on earth. Suppose that Jesus is divine in the approaching-or-attaining-the-status-of-the-God-of-Israel-sense. Then, by this universally accepted premise, he is preexistent. But since preexistent, he fails to fulfill the conditions for being an idealized human figure, as such conditions require non-preexistence. Thus, if divine, then not an idealized human figure. And, of course, it goes the other way, too. If an idealized human figure, then non-preexistent (by Kirk's definition of the term); if non-preexistent, then not divine (by the universally accepted premise); thus, if an idealized human figure, then not divine.

Given the argumentation of the preceding paragraph, understanding a text as depicting someone as both divine and an idealized human figure is understanding a text as internally inconsistent: such a figure would be represented as *both* preexistent and *not* preexistent. Perhaps internal inconsistency is an option to be left open, but I do not recall any place in the book where Kirk argues that a Gospel is internally inconsistent. Since anything logically follows from a contradiction, if the Synoptic Gospels are internally inconsistent, then the Divine paradigm logically follows

4. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 3.
5. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 45.
6. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 3.
7. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 4.
8. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 3.

from them. Given the logical implication of the Divine paradigm, such an internal inconsistency would not be dialectically useful for Kirk's first project of arguing against the textual support of the Divine paradigm. After all, if the text is inconsistent, not only does it support the Divine paradigm, it *entails* the Divine paradigm. It is better for Kirk, given his goals, not to argue for or allow an internally inconsistent reading of the Synoptic Gospels.

Having provided the relevant definitions, I now go on to discuss his two projects—the project of arguing against the Divine paradigm, then the project of arguing for his Idealized Human Figure paradigm.

Kirk's First Project: Arguing Against the Textual Support for the Divine Paradigm

Kirk considers the strongest arguments for the Divine paradigm. Such arguments have a common logical form, which I will put as follows:

1. People in the relevant context only used these words or these descriptions of God.
2. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels are in the relevant contexts and used these words or these descriptions of Jesus.
3. Thus, those authors were representing Jesus as God.

The relevant context throughout most of Kirk's discussion is ancient near eastern Jewish people. That said, both Kirk and his opponents include some discussion of the Roman context, so it would be too narrow to restrict the argument to the former context exclusively. Some examples of the words or descriptions that come under discussion include the following: sharing God's rule, being worshipped, conquering hostile cosmic powers, being enthroned on God's throne, being referred to as God's son, and judging the world.

How does Kirk respond to such arguments? In each case, he accepts the second premise of his opponents' arguments. The Synoptic Gospels *do* predicate such terms of Christ. Instead, he focuses his attention on the first premise. As he says, "if there is a recurring point at which I find myself disagreeing with all of the studies in favor of divine Christology, it is in their failure to consider the vast number of analogous ways that idealized human figures are rendered in other early Jewish texts."[9] In other words, people in the relevant contexts *do* use those words or descriptions to describe things other than God, so Premise 1 is false. His method of justifying this denial of Premise 1 is a thorough and meticulous onslaught of counterexamples to the premise in question.

9. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 30.

Does the opponent say, for instance, that members of such contexts described God alone as receiving worship? Well, this seemingly inexhaustible series of texts shows that claim to be false—many relevant Jewish texts *do* present things other than God as receiving worship, and none of them were thought to have been arguing for the divinity of the worship receiver. As Kirk says, "A good part of my argument is devoted to reimagining the relationship between unique divine attributes and others who might bear them."[10]

As I would formulate the discussion, I would say that Kirk denies the first premise, but accepts a revised first premise:

> 1*. People in the relevant contexts only used these words or these descriptions of God *or God's idealized human figures*.

Such a premise, though, when combined with Premise 2, does not conclude to 3. Rather, it concludes to what we might call 3*:

> 3*. Thus, those authors were representing Jesus as God *or God's idealized human figure*.

Consequently, 3* supports the Divine paradigm no more or less than it supports the Idealized Human Figure paradigm. This is good news for Kirk, since, supposing that his historical examples are correct, it shows that the best arguments in favor of the Divine paradigm support it no more than they support his view. If this were a runoff between the two paradigms, what Kirk has done is show that his opponent's best shot at arguing for the superiority of the opponent's view has, in fact, ended in a tie.

We have seen how Kirk assesses the argumentation of his opponents. How ought we to assess his argumentation in response? We can distinguish between the form of the response and the content (matter) of the response. Concerning the form, logically, it strikes me as a good one. Providing a counterexample or two to the specific instances of Premise 1 would be a good method of refuting the truth of those instances. Kirk provides not just one or two examples, but a veritable avalanche of examples. Considering the form dialectically, it puts the opponent in the unenviable position of having to respond to dozens of texts.

Concerning the content of the response, here I maintain silence. As a professional philosopher in the analytic tradition, this is not my area of expertise.[11] Very often sources are referred to without their history being explained, for instance, 4QFlorilegium (4Q174), 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521), 11QMelchizedek (11Q13), or 4QInstruction^{d} (4Q418), let alone many others. No shame on Kirk for not explicating the history and reception of such sources more. Every author writes for an intended audience with an expected background knowledge. He likely expected,

10. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 17.

11. For a recent edited volume from which to begin an assessment, the reader might look to Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., *Reading Mark in Context: Jesus and Second Temple Judaism*, 2018.

reasonably, that the people to pick up this 638-page highly technical tome would specialize in the relevant texts.

Be that as it may, I find myself being in a situation similar to the following analogy. It is the year 4000 and the internet is an antiquated relic of a bygone era. But every once in a while, someone unearths a preserved SanDisk Extreme Portable Hard Drive, and, sometimes, the contents include a few sources relevant to theology. There is maybe a letter from some Pope Francis, an archived Geocities page entitled "Me and My Bible in My Bedroom," a scan of a pamphlet-with-donation-form from one Benny Hinn, and a Chick tract. Now, coming to a view concerning what twenty-first century Christians were inclined to predicate of God from these sources would be tricky, to say the least. Are they representative of the general view of twenty-first Century Christians?

We must also, in addition to considering the works themselves, consider the formation of the collection or collections of sources, as it can be skewed against representation as well. Personal libraries of theological texts can be quite idiosyncratic. If the hard drive belonged to David Bawden, the recently-deceased Kansas resident who claimed to be the Pope, the bishop of Rome, the servant of the servants of God, the supreme pontiff of the Universal Church, the chances that the library is a collection of unrepresentative texts would be not insignificant. I am neither making any claims about the relative merits of the sources Kirk cites nor saying that any of them were the first century equivalent of a Chick tract. I am merely claiming that assessing the content matter of the argument requires specialization in the texts at hand; there I defer to the specialists. Again, all this is to say that I am not here adjudicating the evidential value of these texts, and *not* to say that I *have* adjudicated their value and judged them to be wanting.

Kirk's Second Project: Arguing for the Ideal Human Figure Paradigm

Consider now the second step—the step of justifying the Ideal Human Figure paradigm as a viable paradigm for viewing the person of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Here, as a propaedeutic to our forthcoming discussion, we do well to note the requirements for justifying a hypothesis based on the evidence available.

Consider the hypothesis that *Paul, the apostle, was a bachelor*. Such a hypothesis is built out of component parts—for instance, it requires Paul to be both male and unmarried. Now, there is good biblical evidence from his own letters for both those claims. But, importantly, to build a case for the hypothesis in question, we would need to provide justification for both elements—for both the claim that he was male and the claim that he was unmarried. Lacking any evidence for his being unmarried, we would be unjustified in concluding that he was a bachelor, even if we had evidence

that he was male. Instead, in such a (fictional) case, we should remain noncommittal about Paul's marital state.

If we were to consider the hypothesis that *Paul was a left-footed bachelor*, we would need even more evidence. Evidence that he is a bachelor would not be sufficient to justify that he was a left-footed bachelor, any more than evidence that he was male (alone) would be evidence that he was a bachelor. Equally importantly, *absence of evidence* that Paul was right-footed would not itself count in favor of the hypothesis that he was left-footed. Absence of evidence of right-footedness is not evidence of absence of right-footedness.

Analogously, to support the claim that Jesus is depicted as an ideal human figure, we would need *evidence for each bit* of the definition of an ideal human figure. We would need evidence from the texts, for instance, to show that Jesus is not an angel and not preexistent. Moreover, *a mere lack of evidence that he is preexistent would not be sufficient* to show that the idealized human figure paradigm is the right one to use, any more than a mere absence of evidence that Paul was right-footed would be evidence for the left-footed bachelor paradigm of Paul. Indeed, and importantly, given what follows, considering each purported bit of biblical evidence for Paul's right-footedness and showing it spurious would not itself be evidence that he was left-footed.

So far, I have argued that (i) justifying a paradigm requires support for each of its constitutive parts and that (ii) a mere lack of evidence for a rival paradigm is not evidence for one's favored paradigm. One might worry that this *mere lack of evidence is insufficient* condition would set the bar too high for paradigm choice. After all, think of all the things the Bible does not say about Paul but that we think we are justified in including in our interpretive paradigm of Paul. The Bible does not say that Paul lacked a hoverboard, yet we feel permitted to assume in our paradigm of Paul that he did not have access to far-future technologies.[12] What is the difference between the case of Paul's hoverboard and the case of Jesus's preexistence?

In reply, one difference is that our greater body of evidence includes no pro-hoverboard evidence for Paul. But our greater body of evidence *does* include preexistence evidence for Christ. As Kirk himself writes, "Divine and preexistence Christologies can be found in the New Testament, including John's Gospel, the Christ hymn of Colossians 1, and the opening salvo of Hebrews."[13] Thus, while the hoverboard hypothesis is outlandish, given other available evidence, the preexistence hypothesis is not.

12. Extra points for anyone who can find a passage that, when read in an ingenious way, is evidence for the claim that Paul lacked a hoverboard. Maybe the shipwreck would have gone differently with a hoverboard?

13. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 16. For more on Kirk's Divine-paradigm reading of other books of the Bible, see page 297 and 398fn120. For more on the Divine paradigm in Paul see page 572. For more on Jesus's preexistence in John, see page 577.

In fact, this general sort of reply—pointing to the larger body of evidence to show an assumption is unwarranted in paradigm choice–should sound familiar to the reader. Kirk himself makes this same move in his response to the argument that I presented as 1-3. There, as we have seen, he noted that his opponent is not justified in just presupposing that mere humans could not receive worship in the relevant context, since other texts in our larger body of evidence show that they could receive worship. Again, I am not here saying that Kirk reads that body of evidence correctly (or incorrectly). I remain silent on that point. I am merely claiming that the structure of this reply to the hoverboard objection is the same as Kirk's arguments against the justification for the Divine paradigm. The larger evidential context does not allow one to presume in paradigm formation that worship is due to God alone. So likewise in the case of Jesus's preexistence: we are not justified in just presupposing in our paradigm formation that Jesus is not preexistent, since other texts in our larger body of evidence show that, in the relevant context, he was seen as preexistent.

For the remainder of this discussion, I want to focus on the "non-preexistent" portion of the concept of an ideal human figure. At the end of the first chapter, which included most of the argumentation concerning what I have formalized in Argument 1-3 above, Kirk writes that two attributes that "might remain important" after his thorough discussion of the others are preexistence and participation in creation.[14] These two attributes remain important because the texts he has been discussing do not provide clear cases of mere humans preexisting or creating the world.[15]

If Kirk's discussion of preexistence does not provide positive reasons for thinking that Jesus was not preexistent, then he will not have provided support for each constitutive part of his Ideal Human Figure paradigm. And if his discussion of preexistence amounts to a long series of arguments for why the support for rival paradigms is lacking, then it will be insufficient for justifying his own paradigm. The question to ask, then, is this: Does Kirk provide positive evidence for the non-preexistence part of his Ideal Human Figure paradigm?

14. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 176.

15. There are some relevant cases, though they are not of the right sort for providing counterexamples to the instances of Premise 1. For instance, Kirk writes of the priest Simon playing "the role of God in a dramatic scene in which God's work is the work of creation" (Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 127). Playing a liturgical role, though, is not the same as Simon *actually creating*. For more on creatures and creation from a view opposing Kirk's, see Loke, *The Origin of Divine Christology*, chap. 3.

In answer: it seems to me that he does not. I do not have space to evaluate each of Kirk's discussions of preexistence here. Consider a brief sampling of discussions of preexistence in the book:

- Concerning the title, "Son of God," Kirk argues that it refers to suffering royalty, *not* to preexistence. Moreover, Kirk argues that the phrase "Son of God" does not connote preexistence, but rather that Christ is king of Israel. Elsewhere, he argues that the title does not indicate preexistence.[16]
- He argues that the temporal sequence of Mark's Jesus does not offer an indication of Jesus's preexistence.[17]
- He argues that Jesus's exaltation to heaven does not indicate a sort of preexistence of Jesus.[18]
- Kirk argues concerning the demons' treatment of Jesus in Mark that "we cannot conclude from their recognition of him that they are identifying someone whom they know from a preexistent past."[19]
- He argues that Simon Gathercole's claim that demonic knowledge of Jesus indicates his preexistence "loses its force" given Kirk's explication of the texts.[20]
- Kirk argues that the beloved son parable in Mark 12 "cannot possibly indicate a special preexistence for Jesus."[21]
- Kirk argues that the "abba, Father" prayer "was not an indication of preexistence or divinity."[22]
- Kirk argues that participation in the divine council is less compelling as evidence for preexistence, given his exegesis of the text.[23]
- Kirk argues that Matthew's centurion's profession of Jesus's divine sonship (Mt 27:54) is not indicative of preexistence.[24]
- Kirk argues that the authority to act on God's behalf, even forgiving sins, does not indicate preexistence.[25]

16. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 190, 202, 215, 222.
17. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 195.
18. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 196–7.
19. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 206.
20. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 207.
21. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 210.
22. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 212.
23. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 244.
24. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 256.
25. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 279.

- Kirk argues that Christ's future return in heavenly glory does not indicate preexistence.[26]
- Kirk argues that appeals to Daniel from Chrys Caragounis fail to show the preexistence of Jesus.[27]
- Kirk argues that Gathercole's argumentation again fails to show preexistence.[28]
- Kirk argues that the "Son of Man" texts fail at showing preexistence.[29]
- Kirk argues that the transfiguration is not evidence of preexistence.[30]
- Kirk argues that Christ's birth story is not evidence for preexistence.[31]
- Kirk argues that Jesus's authority over demonic spirits does not indicate preexistence.[32]
- Kirk argues that "there is no indication in Mark's Gospel that [Davidic Christology] suggests preexistence."[33]

In all these instances, the conclusion is that his opponent's views are not justified by the text in question, and not that his Ideal Human Figure paradigm *is* justified. Going back through the index to check whether I missed any relevant passages, I see seventy page numbers listed for discussions of preexistence. Moreover, the index does not include all the relevant discussions of preexistence. For instance, it does not include the discussions on pages 176, 222, or 228. Try as I might, though, I have not found a text where Kirk provides a positive argument for the non-preexistence of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels.

My main conclusion about this section of the book is that Kirk does not sufficiently justify all the parts of his proffered paradigm, in particular, the non-preexistence part, and that many of the sections that are apparently meant to do so instead amount to arguing against the purported evidence for the Divine paradigm. As mentioned above, though, to show that one's view is right, it is insufficient to show the opponent's arguments spurious. The letter to the Romans does not support Paul's being right-footed, but we cannot conclude to Paul's being left-footed as a result. As the old slogan goes, *absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*. Showing that the authors did not depict Jesus as preexistent is insufficient to show that they were depicting him as non-preexistent—they may have been neutral, or not neutral but intending to represent neutrally, or, etc.

26. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 309, 316, 319–322.
27. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 329.
28. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 322.
29. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 342 and 356.
30. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 347.
31. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 373.
32. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 428.
33. Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 498.

I just referenced dozens of texts in which Kirk is attempting to show that the opponent's purported justification of preexistence fails. For the sake of argument, grant that every one of these attempts succeeds. Even on that supposition, this does not speak in favor of non-preexistence by itself. Such argumentation alone is insufficient to justify the claim that Jesus was non-preexistent. Maybe the idea is that we ought to expect the Synoptic authors to discuss pre-existence explicitly if they really believed in it. It is a pretty big deal. But they do not explicitly discuss it. And so we ought to think that they did not really mean to depict Jesus as preexistent. Even so, this alone would not get us the conclusion that they *did* intend to depict him as non-preexistent. Perhaps instead the idea was that if they did not explicitly depict him as preexistent, then they were intentionally depicting him as non-preexistent. I concluded the hoverboard example with some reasoning to think that this premise is not true. But if this is the idea—*if Jesus is not depicted as preexistent, then he is intentionally depicted as non-preexistent*—it would be good to see the justification worked out for that claim.

To see the point from a different angle, reread the definition of an Ideal Human Figure above, omitting only the "non-preexistent" clause. Such a revised paradigm is noncommittal about whether Jesus was preexistent; maybe he was, maybe he was not. Call the paradigm one forms by taking the Ideal Human Figure paradigm and stripping out the claim that Jesus was non-preexistent the *Non-committal* paradigm.

Non-committal paradigm: A paradigm of interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels upon which Jesus is a non-angelic human being, of the past, present, or anticipated future, who is depicted in textual or other artifacts as playing some unique role in representing God to the rest of the created realm, or in representing some aspect of the created realm before God.[34]

34. Does the word "rest" cause problems for the Non-committal paradigm? One might think it does, as it tacitly implies that the person in question is also part of the created realm. In response, first note that the "rest" portion of the Ideal Human Figure paradigm is not a separate attribute considered and argued for from the text. If it must be read as implying that the person in question is not divine, then it is another part of the Ideal Human Figure paradigm that goes undefended. Second, there is an attenuated sense in which one could say that Jesus is part of creation on the Divine paradigm, *not* because he, the person, is a created thing on that view, but rather in the sense that he has a created human nature. If that is enough to count, in a certain sense, as being part of creation, and so fulfill the "rest" component of the Non-committal paradigm, then the Non-committal paradigm is again consistent with both the Divine and the Ideal Human Figure paradigms. If the reader is still wary of the "rest," then the reader can excise "the rest of" from the Non-committal paradigm, on the grounds that making it non-committal requires making it not both imply the Ideal Human Figure paradigm and preclude the Divine paradigm.

The Non-committal paradigm is entirely consistent with the Divine paradigm, as nothing in the Divine paradigm rules out Jesus's being a non-angel or his representing God to creation in a special way, and nothing in the Non-committal paradigm rules out Jesus's being divine.

It seems to me that Kirk has not provided evidence for the Ideal Human Figure paradigm over the Non-committal paradigm. But then I think he falls prey to an argument similar to his own argumentation against his opponents. Earlier I noted that if Kirk can show that the best his opponents offer does not justify the Divine paradigm over the Ideal Human Figure paradigm, then he has shown that the evidence does not support their theory over his. So much for the alleged superiority of their paradigm: the runoff ends in a tie.

The same point can be made with reference to the Ideal Human Figure paradigm and the Non-Committal paradigm—the texts Kirk supplies do not support the former over the latter. The runoff ends in a tie. Moreover, the Non-Committal paradigm is consistent with both the Ideal Human Figure paradigm and the Divine paradigm. Indeed, defenders of both paradigms will want to accept as constitutive of their own paradigms the Non-Committal paradigm. If Kirk's best arguments in favor of his Ideal Human Figure paradigm only succeed in supporting the Non-Committal paradigm, then he is in the same boat as his Divine paradigm opponents. The evidence he offers, since it is Non-Committal with respect to preexistence and non-preexistence, will no better support the Ideal Human Figure paradigm than it supports the Divine paradigm.

Conclusion

In this brief article I have articulated the main argumentative goals of Kirk's book. He desires to support his Ideal Human Figure paradigm of the Synoptic Gospels while at the same time arguing against the justification of the Divine paradigm of those same Gospels. Next, I turned to assess his two main argumentative strategies. Concerning the first, his argumentation against the justification for holding the Divine paradigm, I judge the form of his argumentation to be good. Concerning its content, I left that assessment to the specialists. Concerning the second, his argumentation for the Ideal Human Figure paradigm, I noted that supporting a paradigm requires providing positive evidence for each part of it, not merely arguing that the opponent's arguments fail to justify the opponent's paradigm. I find such positive evidence to be lacking with respect to the *non-preexistent* part of the Ideal Human Figure paradigm. If such evidence is there and I missed it, I look forward to being corrected on that front.

There is a broader conclusion to draw here as well. It is a good and needful thing for practitioners of distinct fields to work together in thinking through our theology. We need specialists in the languages to help us see the meanings and contours of our theological vocabulary. We need historians to help us understand the intellectual

undercurrents shaping the texts and their transmission. We need scripture scholars to help us understand the Word of God. We need systematicians to help us synthesize the coherent worldview that is provided by that Word. And we need philosophers, too, to help us discern the rational interconnectedness (or lack thereof) of our beliefs and our justifications for them.[35]

35. I thank my copresenters at the *Christ Among the Disciplines* conference in November 2020, where I first gave this response to Kirk: Gary Burnett, Niels Henrik Gregersen, and Brittany Wilson. I especially thank Daniel Kirk for his response to the commentary and our ensuing discussion. I also thank James Arcadi and multiple anonymous referees for comments, and Jordan Wessling and Oliver Crisp for discussion.

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In Other Words? The Difficult Question of Jesus's Divinity in Schleiermacher*

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Abstract: The apparently straightforward question of whether Friedrich Schleiermacher believed that Jesus is God proves surprisingly complex. As a teenager, he confessed to his father that he had lost his faith; but later he claimed to have become a pietist again, if of a higher order. He sharply critiqued Chalcedonian categories but spoke of "an actual being of God in [Christ]." Perhaps Schleiermacher offers an orthodox Christology in other words, one that purifies philosophical categories while retaining the central biblical witness to Jesus as God in the flesh. In the end, however, I argue a cumulative case on the basis of epistolary, exegetical, and dogmatic evidence that Schleiermacher persevered in his unbelief "that He, who called Himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God."

Introduction

At the age of eighteen, Friedrich Schleiermacher wrote an anguished letter to his father, in which he confessed:

> I cannot believe that He, who called Himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God: I cannot believe that His death was a vicarious atonement, because He never expressly said so Himself; and I cannot believe it to have been necessary, because God, who evidently did not create men for perfection, but for the pursuit of it, cannot possibly intend to punish them eternally, because they have not attained it.

Schleiermacher had lost his faith. He pled with his father to pray that God would give him faith again, if his father did believe that "without this faith, no one can attain to salvation in the next world, nor to tranquility in this." And yet he asked him to "not look upon [his current beliefs] as merely transient views, without deep roots. During almost a whole year they have had a hold upon me, and it is long and earnest reflection that has determined me to adopt them."[1]

* Portions of this article appear in Matt Jenson, Theology in the Democracy of the Dead: A Dialogue with the Living Tradition (Baker Academic, 2019). Used by permission.

Twenty years later, upon returning to the place of his conversion among Moravian pietists, Schleiermacher seemed more sanguine about the faith of his father. In the intervening years, he suggested, he had become a "Herrnhuter [Moravian] again, only of a higher order."[2] Much hangs on the entailments of the phrase "higher order." Had Schleiermacher rediscovered religious affection only to empty it of its Christian content? One might easily guess as much from an examination of his *Speeches*. And yet, he spent the later decades of his life as a pastor, preaching and commending the faith of Jesus, and writing a magisterial dogmatic work in which he draws much nearer to the language of Christian faith.

In this article, I will examine the question of Jesus's divinity in Schleiermacher—one that would seem straightforward enough, and surely easy to determine, but which proves surprisingly complex. Recent scholars fall on either side of the question, which turns on the issue of whether Schleiermacher sought to adhere to a somewhat orthodox biblical account of Christ's divinity, albeit one purified by the acids of critique, or whether his critical moves amount to an abandonment of the belief that Christ is God, despite his warmth towards Jesus and Jesus's central place in *Christian Faith*.[3] Did he, in the end, persevere in his unbelief "that He, who called Himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God"?

1. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), 1:46–47.

2. Schleiermacher, *Life of Schleiermacher*, 1:284. It is worth quoting Schleiermacher's letter to George Reimer at length: "Here it was for the first time I awoke to the consciousness of the relations of man to a higher world—in a diminutive form, it is true, just as it is said that spirits sometimes appear in the form of children and dwarfs; but they are nevertheless spirits, and as regards essentials therefore, it comes to the same thing. Here it was that that mystic tendency developed itself, which has been of so much importance to me, and has supported and carried me through all the storms of scepticism. Then it was only germinating, now it has attained its full development, and I may say, that after all that I have passed through, I have become a Herrnhuter again, only of a higher order" (283–84).

3. Terrence Tice says Schleiermacher does not believe Jesus is God; Kevin Hector says he does. Tice and Hector can be seen as two ends of a spectrum along which scholars place Schleiermacher in relation to the tradition. Tice celebrates Schleiermacher's truly liberal theology, free from traditional constraints, whereas Hector finds in Schleiermacher a postmetaphysical theology that is far more amenable to traditional commitments than Schleiermacher himself realized. We might situate Brian Gerrish somewhere between the two, as he sets Schleiermacher in the context of Reformed theology as one who "continued the Reformation." That such careful scholars could take such divergent opinions is enough to suggest something of the complexity of the question and to warrant our taking another look at the father of modern theology. Tice, *Schleiermacher* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 37; Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006), 307–22). Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Schleiermacher Writes a Letter to His Wife

To begin with, let's consider a letter Schleiermacher wrote to his wife, Henriette von Mühlenfels. Henriette had been the widow of one of Schleiermacher's friends. When the two married he was forty and she was twenty-one, and Henriette "respected Schleiermacher like a father."[4] Despite their difference in age and maturity, Schleiermacher sought to honor the integrity of his wife's religious experience. At least once, however, he stepped in. Apparently, Henriette was encouraging the children to worship Jesus. This would seem to be right and good, but Schleiermacher wrote and asked his wife to adjust her approach.

I first learned about this letter in a footnote in Abraham Kunnuthara's book *Schleiermacher on Christian Consciousness of God's Work in History*. Kunnuthara tells of a personal note he received from Terrence Tice, one of the great Schleiermacher scholars of our day and the co-translator of the recent English translation of *Christian Faith*. Tice wrote that "in a letter he (S) once strongly admonished his wife against encouraging Jesus-worship, saying that the authentic reference is always to God in Christ, to our communion with God in and through Christ (and he could easily have added: This is what we call the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit)."[5] This would seem to be definitive, proving that Schleiermacher did not believe Jesus to be God. There's nothing heterodox, of course, with speaking of God in Christ or emphasizing that our communion with God occurs in and through Christ. But when this comes in the context of discouraging the worship of Jesus, it seems clear that, whatever exalted position Jesus might have in mediating God's work in the world, he does so as less than God.

Still, that is quite a claim. I needed to check my conclusion against the letter itself. Along the way, Terry Tice and I became friends. He was a remarkably kind and generous man, a latter-day Schleiermacher in his warmth and genius for friendship. Terry and I corresponded off and on for quite a while, spoke on the phone, and then met up for lunch in Denver a few years ago. After lunch, we went back to his condo to hunt for the letter, which I had had a difficult time tracking down.[6] After a couple of hours, we found it, as excited as two boys on a treasure hunt. Here is the relevant section, which makes up the bulk of the letter:

> In reference to your letter to Hildchen, darling mother, I have something on my mind. You have adopted the way of speaking constantly of the Saviour and placing God quite in the background. If it be the Saviour also who speaks to us from nature, then there can hardly be any direct relation more between

4. Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 210.

5. Abraham Kunnuthara, *Schleiermacher on Christian Consciousness of God's Work in History* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 45n8.

6. To say the least! I had contacted most of the senior English-language Schleiermacher experts in search of it. No one could help.

> us and God. And yet Christ himself seeks above all to impress upon us that through him we come to the Father, and that the Father abides in us. In your way the true simplicity of Christianity is absorbed in some self-made system that Christ would not have approved. I am so afraid that the poor girl may get confused between your ways and mine; for she is no longer so wanting in reflection as not to be struck by the discrepancy. Dearest heart, do try to hold fast the belief that *with* Christ and *through* Christ, we are to rejoice in his and our Father.[7]

What Tice remembered as a clear indication that Schleiermacher rejects the worship of Jesus turns out to admit of a more subtle interpretation.[8] True, Schleiermacher does not want his children's piety terminating at Christ. We do not come *to* Christ so much as come *through* Christ to the Father. Christ is the one mediator; he is the way. But how strange if we confuse the way for the destination, confuse the one who brings us to God with God himself. Notice how even my language hops back and forth between orthodox Christological categories (Christ as mediator, the one in and through whom we approach the Father) and more suspect language (a way which is other than the destination). It is more difficult than I first thought to determine if Schleiermacher is only drawing his wife back to a properly Johannine insight, that "no one comes to the Father except through" Jesus (John 14:6), or if he is suggesting a subordinationist Christology, even a Christology in which Christ's mediation exhausts his uniqueness. Surely, he is right to invite his family "*with* Christ and *through* Christ . . . to rejoice in his and our Father." But whether he would join the angels who praise the Lamb who was slain, declaring him worthy of "honor and glory" is another question (Rev. 5:12).

The Same Thing in Other Words?

In the question of how to interpret Schleiermacher's words to his wife, much hangs on the nature and extent of his criticism of traditional Christological terms. Schleiermacher is forthright in his judgments about the incoherence and inaptitude

7. Schleiermacher, *Life of Schleiermacher*, 2:326.

8. In fact, the ambiguity of the letter is such that I later discovered that I had found this letter months earlier, emailed Tice about it, and determined it could not be the letter to which he had referred in his note to Abraham Kunnuthara! Tice seems to read Schleiermacher in a strongly heterodox direction (rightly or wrongly). One bit of evidence can be found in a shift in translation. J. Y. Campbell, in the older Mackintosh and Stewart edition (1928), had rendered "unbedingteste Verehrung" (*Christian Faith* §96.1) as our "unconditional adoration" of Christ, but this becomes an "unqualified respect" in Tice's edition (2016). One can speak of our "Verehrung" for the saints, so "adoration" is too strong; but "respect" is likewise too weak. Neither translation seems to have quite captured Schleiermacher's sense. For the German, see Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt, Zweite Auflage (1830/31)*, ed. Rolf Schäfer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008). Thanks to Mark Elliott for his help on this.

of the language of Chalcedon. "Nature," for instance, is fraught with problems. For one thing, it is "used commensurately for what is divine and what is human," illicitly bringing God and the world under one genus.[9] There's a problem, then, in ascribing a nature to God. There's an additional problem in speaking of Christ as one person in two natures—which confuses our common use of those terms. We speak, instead, of two people who share a nature. What would it mean to speak of one person sharing two natures? "How, then, is the unity of a person's life to endure with the duality of natures without the one yielding to the other when the one offers a larger and the other a narrower course of life, or, without the two natures blending into each other, in that the two systems of law and conduct actually become one in the one life?"[10] Still more confusing is the inversion of these terms in trinitarian theology, so that "we then maintain in the one place three persons in *one* being and in the other place *one* person out of two natures."[11]

Schleiermacher finds all this language intolerably scholastic, too far from the language and experience of faith, philosophically incoherent and theologically not up to the task. He finds it necessary to no longer treat "Supreme Being as a nature," and he seeks "to denote the interrelation of what was divine and what was human in the Redeemer in such a way that the two expressions—most troublesome, to put it mildly—namely, 'divine nature' and 'duality of natures in the same person,' are avoided entirely."[12] However we speak of him, then, we cannot say that Jesus has a divine nature.

Clearly, Schleiermacher's critique is radical. But here we should step back for a moment and ask: Can we say that Jesus is God in other words? More specifically, can we say that Jesus is God in non-conciliar words? In one sense, this must be possible. The Bible "says" that Jesus is God—we must confess that, whether we do so with reference to specific prooftexts or in terms of the *skopos* of Scripture—and yet it does so without the benefit of Nicaea and Chalcedon. That much should be non-controversial. And while a commitment to *sola scriptura* pairs exceedingly well with an affirmation of the relative authority of the ecumenical creeds, one can imagine a faithful biblical Christianity that is completely ignorant of Nicaea and Chalcedon. The task, then, is to do just that—*imagine* such a Christianity, and then test it against the rule of Scripture.

This is an issue both for those interested in alternative metaphysical projects and those involved in contextualization in non-Western contexts. In his fascinating reconsideration of theology under the conditions of modernity, Kevin Hector has

9. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, trans. Terrence N. Tice, Catherine L. Kelsey, and Edwina G. Lawler, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), §96.1.

10. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.1.

11. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.1.

12. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §§97.5, 96.3.

set forth a post-metaphysical theology in which Schleiermacher frequently plays a heroic role.[13] It is commonplace to mark Schleiermacher's Christology as "low," given his critique of Chalcedonian Christology. Hector is as bold in response as he is contrarian: "Schleiermacher's Christology is, in some respects, even higher than traditional Chalcedonianism, if by "high" we mean the unequivocal recognition that Christ is God incarnate, and that he is uniquely so. On Schleiermacher's account, every moment of Christ's life repeats the pure act of God's being, such that Christ *is* God incarnate."[14] Notice at once the rejection of substance-language in favor of act *and* the insistence that a different idiom can deliver the goods: Christ's repetition of God's being-in-act demonstrates and enacts the incarnation of God in Christ. We will return to the question of whether Schleiermacher's novel language can carry as much freight as Hector thinks, but for now we simply note his sharp argument that a rejection of Christological concepts need not require a rejection of Christological judgments.[15]

I mentioned above the relevance of this question for contextualization in non-Western contexts. We might think of this along one of three lines. First, consider the previously unreached people group, which has joyfully received the gospel of Jesus Christ and been given the gift of at least part of the Scriptures. These people begin the communal project of building a lived theology from the ground up; and while it might be helpful at certain times to be acquainted with the resources of the global church, at other times it might not. Furthermore, the exigencies of the context may make those resources inaccessible (translation alone often presenting a significant hurdle). Or consider Christian witness among Muslims, where Christianity is deemed and dismissed as hopelessly "Western," something inherently antagonistic to the Arabic culture of Islam. Without accepting this false narrative, we could imagine why, say, Syrian or Iraqi Christians might want to distance themselves from the Greek philosophical milieu in which Nicaea and Chalcedon dress Christology (not to mention the Holy Roman Emperors who called the councils). Finally, consider the long witness of non-Chalcedonian Christians in the Middle East, most of whom may not even know that they are heretics (if I can put it so puckishly). There are

13. See Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. 1–46, in which he provides the rationale for a "therapeutic anti-metaphysics"; and Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). He also speaks of a "post-essentialist theology" in Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation," 322.

14. Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation," 308. Also see Hector, *Theological Project of Modernism*, 112–16.

15. Here I recall David Yeago's distinction between concepts and judgments in his classic article, "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 87–100. And note Jacqueline Mariña's contention that Schleiermacher "preserves the upshot of the insights of Chalcedon while at the same time rejecting the language in which those insights were framed." Mariña, "Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153.

so few Christians in that region of the world, and they face a near-daily existential threat. I can imagine an attempt by a happily Chalcedonian Christian group to forge ecumenical bonds with the Nestorian church for the sake of mutual encouragement and mission and, in the process, exploring non- (if not anti-) conciliar ways in which to confess that the Son is what Chalcedon knows him to be, fully God and fully man.[16]

In light of this, we cannot dismiss Schleiermacher's Christology simply on the basis of his critique of Chalcedon. As is always the case, such a critique must be *interpreted*. Does Schleiermacher discern in the ecumenical councils an incoherent deployment of borrowed metaphysical concepts that is philosophically indefensible? Or does his objection extend beyond conceptual scrupulosity to the judgments of the councils? Even if he cannot affirm with Chalcedon that "one and the same Christ" is "recognized in two natures," can he confess (to use Nicaea's less philosophically loaded language) that Jesus Christ is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God"?[17] How far do the acids of critique spread? Before offering our final judgment on this question, we will discuss Schleiermacher's own idiom for articulating the uniqueness and dignity of Christ, to which we now turn.

The Distinction of the Redeemer

No careful reader of Schleiermacher's mature work can deny the centrality of Jesus to his vision of the Christian life. Whatever our final verdict on the question of Schleiermacher's Christology, to suggest that Jesus is of little concern to Schleiermacher is profoundly to misread him. Before we are in a position to answer the vexed question of whether Schleiermacher believes Jesus is God, then, we do well to attend to what he clearly and unequivocally affirms about him.

In what comes close to a programmatic statement, and one that parallels Chalcedon in some ways, Schleiermacher writes of Jesus (who he consistently refers to as "the Redeemer"),

> The Redeemer is the same as all human beings by virtue of the selfsame character of human nature, but he is distinguished from all other human beings by the steady strength of his God-consciousness, a strength that was an actual being of God in him.[18]

16. These last two examples are not hard at all for me to imagine. They relate to conversations I've had with two Western missionaries in the Middle East over the last few years. On the long history of Christianity outside the West, see Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

17. Of course, the Creed immediately continues with "begotten, not made, *homoousios* with the Father." As much as at Chalcedon, the Nicene bishops found it necessary to employ philosophical concepts even in confessing Christ.

18. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §94.

Jesus is fully human, then. In fact, while Schleiermacher rejects "nature" language for the divine, he happily employs it for the human. Human nature is common to all human beings, and so Jesus "is the same" as the rest of us. With Hebrews, Schleiermacher will emphasize this common humanity and admit of only one qualification, that Jesus is "without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

What distinguishes him from us, though, is not the possession of a divine nature (that is Chalcedon's answer), but "the steady strength of his God-consciousness." Jesus always, in every way, lives from an awareness of and dependence on God. The rest of us, on our best days, experience a fluctuation in our God-consciousness, being aware of and depending on God in fits and starts. But God is the source of Jesus's life, in an absolute sense, such that "always and everywhere all that is human in him came from what is divine."[19]

Note, too, Schleiermacher's identification of Jesus's God-consciousness with "an actual being of God in him." What are we to make of this identification, and of Schleiermacher's own use of the language of the being of God in Christ? Here he is at length:

> The being of God in the Redeemer is posited as his innermost primary strength, from which all his activity proceeds and which links all the elements of his life together. However, everything human simply forms the organism for this primary strength and relates itself to that strength as its system both for taking this strength in and for presenting it, just as in us all other strengths have to relate to our intelligence. Thus, if this expression departs greatly from the former scholastic language, nonetheless it rests in equal measure on the Pauline expression "God was in Christ" and on the Johannine expression "The Word became flesh," for "word" is the activity of God expressed in the form of consciousness and "flesh" is the general designation for what is organic.
>
> Now, to the extent that all human activity of the Redeemer in its every connection depends on this being of God in him and presents it, the expression that God became human in the Redeemer is justified since the expression befits him exclusively. . . . Always and everywhere all that is human in him came from what is divine.[20]

Despite his use of the Johannine "Word become flesh" idiom, this seems to describe an indwelling rather than an incarnation.[21] It is not that the second person of the

19. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.3.

20. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.3. A way of reading this strange passage that I won't explore further here is to find in it a subtle Apollinarianism, following Schleiermacher's remark that "the being of God" : Christ :: "our intelligence" : us. This suggests that "divinity" might function to replace Christ's human mind or soul.

21. While there is some precedent for a Christology of indwelling (Athanasius speaks of "the Lord Who is in the flesh as in a temple" in *Ep.* 60.7), note the problems that come with failing properly to distinguish between the incarnation of the Word in Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit in Christ and believers. See Joanna Leidenhag and R. T. Mullins, "Flourishing in the Spirit:

Trinity "becomes" flesh: Note Schleiermacher's de-personalized reading of this in which "word" designates not an eternal trinitarian person but "the activity of God."[22] Instead, the Redeemer is uniquely indwelt by God, fully so, such that "all that is human in him came from what is divine." We might read this as a straightforward reading of the biblical language of God acting in Christ (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:19), though one not tempered or complemented by the biblical language of the Word *who was with God and who was God* becoming flesh (John 1:1). To put it roughly, the New Testament witness requires us to say both that God was in Christ and that God was Christ, whereas Schleiermacher's account calls that second point into question. And yet—this continues to be a difficult knot to untie—Schleiermacher so esteems the being of God in Christ that he can speak of "this complete indwelling of Supreme Being as [Christ's] distinctive nature and his innermost self."[23] That is, even as he withdraws from traditional use of incarnational language, he is not content to use indwelling language in such a way as to draw a sharp line between Christ and the God in Christ. God's indwelling *is* Jesus's "distinctive nature and his innermost self." Strange language, that. He might more easily have said that *God*, not God's *indwelling* is Christ's innermost self. But still, questions remain.

Schleiermacher repeats the identification of the Redeemer's strong and steady God-consciousness with the being of God in Christ a bit later, writing that

> instead of our clouded and weak God-consciousness, in [Jesus] there was an absolutely clear God-consciousness, one that was exclusively determining every element of his life, hence one that must be regarded to be a steady living presence, consequently to be a true being of God in him.[24]

A further clue to Jesus's uniqueness can be found here in the language of weak and strong, which suggests that this might be a *quantitative* rather than a *qualitative* distinction. Even if no other human being approaches the strength of Jesus's God-consciousness, the God-consciousness of Christ and that of other human beings is of the same kind. In one sense, this oughtn't surprise us: Schleiermacher is everywhere concerned to speak of the deeply human work of redemption that Christ performed and the deeply human way we are caught up in it. While he acknowledges the miraculous nature of Jesus's birth, Schleiermacher insists that Christ's God-consciousness developed gradually, though it always reigned over his self-consciousness.[25] This

Distinguishing Incarnation and Indwelling for Theological Anthropology," in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 182–99.

22. Note that even here Schleiermacher avoids any suggestion that the preexistent second person of the Trinity is the Word who became flesh. "The word become flesh is God's word spoken and enacted in Christ, not a preexistent part of the Godhead become incarnate." Tice, *Schleiermacher*, 76.

23. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §94.2.

24. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.3.

25. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §93.3. Kevin Hector writes that "Jesus was born not with

Redeemer is a human being who grows "in wisdom and stature" even as he is "without sin" (Lk. 2:52; Heb. 4:15). In fact, it seems essential that Jesus's God-consciousness is only quantitatively distinct from ours. This grounds what Richard Niebuhr calls the "Christo-morphic" character of Schleiermacher's theology. "His theology is Christo-morphic in two senses," Niebuhr writes.

> First of all, it asserts that Jesus of Nazareth objectively exhibits what human nature ideally is. . . . In this sense, then, the redeemer is the measure of human nature. And, in the second place, the redeemer is the historical person whose presence mediated through Scriptures, preaching and the Holy Spirit becomes the abiding occasion for the reorganization and clarifying of the Christian's consciousness of his absolute dependence, of his identity in the world, and of his appropriate actions toward and responses to others.[26]

Notice the abiding difference Jesus makes in the world for Schleiermacher. He is no mere founder of a religion, but the Redeemer whose mediated presence continues to transform others.

But how, we might wonder, does this one possessed of a perfect God-consciousness redeem? In traditional language, how does this person do his work? For Schleiermacher, Christ's God-consciousness, Christ's being this one among us, just *is* redemption:

> The nature of redemption consists in the fact that the previously weak and suppressed God-consciousness in human nature is raised and brought to the point of dominance through Christ's entrance into it and vital influence upon it.[27]

This passage captures much of what Schleiermacher has to say on the subject. Human nature has always been conscious of God, but before Christ was born this consciousness was weak, diffuse, and suppressed. It lacked the strength to determine human existence, and we participated in its further compromise by burying it beneath our sensory preoccupations. In entering and influencing human nature, Christ raised our consciousness of God to the point where it gained dominance, reaching a height it had never before known. Christ completes God's creation of humanity as the "second Adam" in whom God-consciousness is perfect and absolute. He is like us in every way, except for sin, and *just so*—by living from a perfect consciousness of God, in absolute dependence on God in every way—he is "the originator and author of this more complete human life, or the completion of the creation of humanity."[28]

an absolutely powerful God-consciousness, therefore, but with a sufficiently powerful one—sufficiently powerful, that is, to outpace the development of his sensible consciousness." Hector, *Theological Project of Modernism*, 114.

26. Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 212–13.

27. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §106.1.

28. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §89.1.

Because redemption is a matter of Christ's elevating human nature by "tak[ing] up persons of faith up into the strength of his God-consciousness," what matters for redemption is that he lived throughout his life in the strength of that God-consciousness.[29] Christ redeemed us, that is, by living a sinless life, ever open and receptive to God, and drawing us into that life. To live without sin just is to live in absolute dependence on God, and Jesus's sinless perfection "consists simply in a pure will that is oriented to the reign of God."[30] In the New Testament, redemption is frequently tied to the death of Christ, usually recalling the sacrifice for sins in the Old Testament (see Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12, 15). But for Schleiermacher, it is as he lives his life that Christ redeems us. Catherine Kelsey captures this beautifully:

> What did Christ *do* that results in our redemption? He made his own inner life visible, a life in which every impulse was motivated by the divine will, a life in which his relationship with God took up, processed, and directed every physical input and every thought and action. In making his inner life visible, he evoked our receptivity to being taken up into that same relationship with God. Finally, he secured all those who are taken up into this relationship into a community, a physical presence for one another and for the world. The redeemed now experience blessedness.[31]

Christ redeems by living in the strength of his God-consciousness and proclaiming himself as the way, the truth, and the life that God has introduced in the world for our redemption.[32] The death of Jesus is, strictly speaking, irrelevant to redemption.[33] Or, to put it differently, Jesus died not in order to redeem us but as a consequence of his redemptive life, as lived out in the face of those who opposed the reign of God.

Ever leery of scholasticism and speculation, Schleiermacher makes a programmatic decision in his dogmatics that,

> since all Christian piety rests on the appearance of the Redeemer. . . . nothing touching upon the Redeemer can be set forth as genuine doctrine that is not

29. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §100.

30. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §122.3.

31. Kelsey, *Thinking About Christ with Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 70.

32. According to Schleiermacher, Christ's self-proclamation is the "*one* source from which all Christian doctrine is derived." Kevin M. Vander Schel writes that Christ proclaims himself as the one who "inaugurates a higher life, and in which the relation to God becomes the principle of human living." Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §19.P.S.; Vander Schel, *Embedded Grace: Christ, History, and the Reign of God in Schleiermacher's Dogmatics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 162.

33. I am putting this more pointedly than Kelsey in *Thinking About Christ with Schleiermacher* (65). This is reflected in the paucity of sermons that Schleiermacher preached on the death (and resurrection) of Jesus. Of 185 sermons on the Synoptic Gospels, 146 cover the time between Jesus's baptism and arrest. Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996, 79.

> tied to his redemptive causality and that does not permit of being traced back to the original and distinctive impression that his actual existence made.[34]

Since Jesus's "redemptive causality" is limited to his sinless life lived in the strength of his God-consciousness, this narrows the scope of Christology considerably. The pre-existence, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ cannot, then, and do not belong to Christian doctrine. Surely this contributes to the difficulty of discerning certain aspects of Schleiermacher's implied Christology. Schleiermacher denies Christ's pre-existence, and he suggests that "the facts regarding Christ's resurrection and ascension and the prediction of his return to judge cannot be set forth as genuine components of the doctrine of his person."[35] Because we can know the Redeemer apart from these facts, "the correct impression of Christ can exist, and also did so, without taking any notice of these factual claims."[36] After all, if we believe, as Schleiermacher does, that people were redeemed during Jesus's life and ministry, we could not suppose that a knowledge of his death or resurrection were necessary to experience that redemption.[37] And so, Schleiermacher concludes (with reference to the resurrection and ascension) that "our faith in Christ and our living communion with him would be the same even if we had no knowledge" of these facts or if they were different.[38] To which we can only reply with Paul, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 14:14).

But Is Jesus *God*?

We return to our initial question. In doubting the deity of Christ, Schleiermacher lost the faith of his youth. And yet, he cherished the Redeemer throughout his life and wrote a magnificent account of Christian faith. What became, then, of this earlier doubt? Does Schleiermacher, finally, believe that our Redeemer is God? To put it the other way round, does the mature Schleiermacher object to the truth claim that Jesus is God or (only) to traditional explanations for *how* he is God?[39]

34. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §29.3.

35. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §99.

36. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §99.1.

37. See Kelsey, *Thinking About Christ*, 11, 65.

38. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §170.3. Schleiermacher is speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity here with reference to the resurrection and ascension. In full, the sentence reads: "Moreover, it [i.e., the doctrine of the Trinity] would also resemble these doctrines in that our faith in Christ and our living communion with him would be the same even if we had no knowledge of this transcendent fact [i.e., the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity] or if this fact were different." While Schleiermacher does affirm the historicity of the resurrection, Nathan Hieb argues that its place in his system is "precarious" at best and judges that Schleiermacher's overall treatment amounts to "an implicit rejection of resurrection." Heib, "The Precarious Status of Resurrection in Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 (2007), 414.

39. Hector argues for the latter alternative on the basis of Schleiermacher's actualism,

On the one hand, he subjects traditional formulations of Christian doctrine to incisive critique, as we have seen. He dismantles conciliar Christological concepts in such a way as to invite the question of whether he can affirm the judgments they had been enlisted to support. If he is to affirm that Jesus is God, then, we might expect him to be on the lookout for opportunities to do so elsewhere. When it comes to the biblical material, however, Schleiermacher employs a deflationary exegesis. He finds the attribution of divine names to Christ in Scripture ambiguous, pointing out that it is difficult "to distinguish the utterances of a deep reverence that is not in the proper sense divine from strict devotion." And those divine activities, such as creation and preservation, that seem to indicate Christ's divinity "are ascribed to Christ only in such a way that it must remain doubtful whether he is not to be effective cause only insofar as he is final cause."[40] Perhaps it is not that all things were created *by* Jesus, but that they were created *for* him. At each of these points, where the opportunity arises to affirm that Jesus is God, Schleiermacher balks, calling into question traditional interpretations, suggesting alternative reads.

On the other hand, Schleiermacher insists that Christ is utterly unique among human beings, dignified precisely by the divine presence within him. The absolute strength of Jesus's God-consciousness "must be regarded to be a steady living presence" and thus a "true" or "actual being of God in him."[41] Already in the *Speeches* Schleiermacher can speak of this presence in terms of Christ's "divinity": "The consciousness of the uniqueness of his religiousness, of the originality of his view, and of its power to communicate itself and arouse religion was at the same time the consciousness of his office as mediator and of his divinity."[42] At times, Schleiermacher points to biblical precedent. While he resolutely refuses to speak of Jesus's "divine nature," he nevertheless refers to "the being of God in the Redeemer . . . as his innermost primary strength, from which all his activity proceeds and which links all the elements of his life together."[43] He insists, as we have seen, that

concluding that he holds a surprisingly high Christology, one more amenable to more traditional aspects of Christology (like preexistence) than Schleiermacher realized. See Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation."

40. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §99.P.S. He makes the same move in an 1832 study of Col. 1:15–20, where "he conceives the role of the historical Jesus in creation in a way that avoids claiming Jesus' preexistence. . . . All is dependent on Christ, not as the mediator of creation, but as its consummation." Christine Helmer, "The Consummation of Reality: Soteriological Metaphysics in Schleiermacher's Interpretation of Colossians 1:15–20," in *Biblical Interpretation: History, Context, and Reality*, ed. C. Helmer and T. G. Petrey (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 121–22.

41. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.3; §94.

42. Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 120.

43. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §96.3. Similarly, he speaks of "God-consciousness in [Christ's] self-consciousness as determining every element of his life steadily and exclusively" and of "this complete indwelling of Supreme Being as [Christ's] distinctive nature and his innermost self" §94.2.

"if this expression departs greatly from the former scholastic language, nonetheless it rests in equal measure on the Pauline expression 'God was in Christ' and on the Johannine expression 'The Word became flesh.'"[44]

Schleiermacher's genuine love for Jesus makes this a particularly difficult question to answer, but I am convinced that, in the end, Schleiermacher did not believe that Jesus is God. This is something of a cumulative case. It begins with the early letter to his father in which he writes, "I cannot believe that He, who called Himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God." This is a strong denial, and as far as I can see Schleiermacher never recants. Secondly, while we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of his exegesis, its deflationary effect further evinces a reverence of Jesus that stops short of identifying him as God. This is *dulia*, not *latria*. Finally, Schleiermacher's quiet avoidance of Jesus-worship, no matter how often he expresses affection for the Redeemer, suggests a radical revision of the Christian faith: We worship God and celebrate his work in Christ, but we do not worship Christ himself.[45] This seems to leave Jesus on the side of humanity, no matter how much we reverence him and no matter that God uniquely and completely indwells him.[46] And thus it fails to do justice to John's vision:

> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,
>
> > 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
> > Be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.' (Rev. 5:13)

In its praise, all of creation witnesses to this one who is *with* God *as* God (see John 1:1).

We can test this conclusion against the Gospel of John, Schleiermacher's favorite gospel.[47] At times, the Johannine Jesus beautifully exemplifies Schleiermacher's account of a strong God-consciousness: "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of

44. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith* §94.2.

45. Kunnuthara points out that "one would not see any reference or allusion to worship of either Jesus or the Holy Spirit in his writing. . . . One may find in Schleiermacher's sermons expressions that may mislead one to think there is endorsement for Jesus-worship [but this typically] means only utmost respect and nothing more. . . . Schleiermacher does not use even *die Gottheit* [divinity] for Jesus, unless it is in the sense of being a carrier of the divine activity. For him, 'divinity' denotes God's active presence in human consciousness. . . . The perfect humanity and divinity are roughly identical in Jesus; they are only two respects of thinking almost the same thing from two different angles." Kunnuthara, *God's Work in History*, 45–46.

46. I agree with David Law's judgment that, for Schleiermacher, "Christ does not share in the very being of God, but is a human being who is wholly centred on God. 'Divinity' is a circumlocution for a quality of Jesus' human existence, rather than an ontological statement about the character of his being" (36). This seems to be the case in Schleiermacher's sermon "The Redeemer: Both Human and Divine," in *Servant of the Word: Selected Sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher*, trans. Dawn DeVries (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 36–42. Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Thanks to George Hunsinger for this reference.

47. Here I recognize that I am not following Schleiermacher's methodology but am subjecting his claim to a biblical criterion. To which I can only reply that his method is not mine.

him who sent me" (5:30). But despite the continual deference of Jesus to the one he calls Father, he claims a startling equality with him, a claim that leads to his death. The Father "has given all judgment to the Son," Jesus says, "that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father" (5:22). As we have seen, Schleiermacher suspects the biblical language of "honoring" to fall short of attributing deity to Jesus, but the strict parallel between the honor accorded to Father and Son here ("just as") suggests that we view the honor given to both in the same light. "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him," the evangelist writes, "because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God" (5:18). The upshot of these statements of Jesus is that, as Son, Jesus has an utterly unique relationship with the Father. He is the Father's *only* Son, and just so he is ("the Jews" were right on this score) equal to God. While it indeed seems Jesus has a perfect, undiluted, unimpeded God-consciousness, this is not enough to establish his *equality* with God and the *in principle* (not just in fact) unique character of his relationship with God as the only Son of the Father (compare 3:16).

In a study of Schleiermacher's interpretation of Jesus in the Gospel of John, Catherine Kelsey, a sympathetic interpreter, remarks that, though it was his favorite Gospel, "Schleiermacher regularly interpreted John in contradiction to some of the text's strongest themes."[48] Greatest among these is Jesus as the one who was with God and was God, the one who the earliest believers instinctively worshiped. Perhaps if Schleiermacher had attended more closely to the resurrection narratives, he would have found it more natural to exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

48. Catherine L. Kelsey, *Schleiermacher's Preaching, Dogmatics, and Biblical Criticism: The Interpretation of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007), 103.

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Theology in a Missional Mode: Harvie Conn's Contribution

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Systematic Theology Under Attack

Today systematic theology is under attack in many circles. It has been knocked off its privileged perch for a variety of reasons. John Goldingay speaks for many that "if systematic theology did not exist, it might seem unwise to invent it."[1] We are in a new *postmodern climate* that distrusts both reason and all totalizing systems structured by human rationality. There is suspicion that the systems of theology are less systems found in Scripture and more products of creative human construction. Moreover, there has been a recovery of the *storied shape of the Scriptural canon* accompanied by a deepened awareness of the *diversity of literary genres*. The Bible is not simply a data dump of theological propositions,[2] nor a storehouse of isolated theological facts waiting to be arranged coherently by the systematic mind, nor a book with theological pieces of a jigsaw puzzle waiting to be assembled.[3] The Bible is in its overall shape a story of redemption with many genres that equip us differently to live in that story. Kevin Vanhoozer criticizes the approach of "large swaths of the Western tradition" with their reductionist view of revelation which sees "the task of theology" as consisting "in mining propositional nuggets from the biblical deposit of truth."[4] It is not so evident today that the Scriptures can be reduced to propositional nuggets of truth. Rather the overall storied form of the scriptural canon consisting of many literary genres is exactly what we need and what God wanted us to have. A final critique is that much systematic theology is abstract and therefore *unhelpful and irrelevant to the pastoral and missional life* of the church. As Vanhoozer suggests, "Laypersons in the church would perhaps have been within their rights

1. John Goldingay, "Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology," in Max Turner and Joel B. Green, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 138.

2. Michael Williams, "Systematic Theology as a Biblical Discipline," *All for Jesus: A Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Covenant Theological Seminary*, eds. R.A. Peterson and S.M. Lucas (Fearn, Ross Shire: Christian Focus, 2005), 203. He critiques this view.

3. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 29. He affirms this view.

4. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 94.

to bring a class-action suit against systematic theologians for criminal pastoral and missiological negligence."[5]

Should we then abandon systematic theology as a product of the Enlightenment? Or can it be re-envisioned to serve and equip the church in its missional vocation? I believe we need to pursue the latter option. And one of the most helpful voices for helping us along this path is Harvie Conn, former professor of mission at Westminster Theological Seminary, who sets a "new course" for theology.[6]

Harvie Conn and a New Course for Theology

The question might be asked why Harvie Conn? Conn was a missionary in South Korea for 12 years and returned to teach at Westminster Seminary. He taught there for 27 years (1972–1999) during the "glory days" of the seminary's life. Mark Gornik makes the remarkable statement that Conn "may well have had the widest and most significant influence of any professor in the history of Westminster Theological Seminary."[7] Wilbert Shenk, perhaps the most influential American missiologist alive today, once said that Conn had one of the most brilliant minds of any 20th century missiologist in the United States. These two statements alone warrant a closer look at Conn's legacy.

But why Conn *on theology*? Even though his reflection on hermeneutics and theological method are quite sophisticated—after all, he was first hired at Westminster Seminary to replace Cornelius Van Til teaching apologetics and theology—this did not remain Conn's primary area of academic expertise. So why did he wade into such controversial and deep waters? What motivates him to take up this task of setting a new course for theology? His primary concern is transparent: all attempts to construct a timeless and universal theology are "destructive of mission. Seeing theology as an essentializing science and the creeds as the product of that kind of theological reflection inhibits us as well from facing up to our own contemporary missiological task and its risk."[8] Conn's cross-cultural experience enabled him to see the ways Western theology had capitulated to the idolatrous currents of its culture and its debilitating influence on the church and its mission.

Conn's concern for the renewal of theology can be captured in this way. Churches in the urban setting require faithful leaders who can lead those churches

5. Kevin Vanhoozer, "One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity," *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 93.

6. Harvie M. Conn, "Theology and Theologizing: A New Course," in *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Trialogue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 209–260.

7. Mark Gornik, "The Legacy of Harvie M. Conn," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 4 (October 2011): 216.

8. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 223.

to embrace their missional vocation. The problem is that the theology that most pastors receive do not do that; in fact, they inhibit that calling. Conn's concern is fundamentally ecclesiological and missiological: what kind of theology will form leaders and churches to faithfully carry out witness in life, word, and deed in the cities of the world?

The "question is not simply, or only, or largely, missions and what it is. The question is also theology and what it does."[9] This statement is important. We can talk a lot about mission by piling up courses in the practical theology department on every aspect of the missional task of the church. And that is important. But the further issue is *what is theology and what does it do?* Theology will either nurture or undermine the missional calling of the church. The scholastic theology Conn sees at work in his own Reformed family erodes the church's missional identity and vocation. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for more discussion on mission to restore that calling if missiology must swim against such powerful theological streams. The whole theological enterprise needs to serve the vocation of God's people.

In my estimation one of the richest contributions Harvie Conn can make to the global church today is helping us to rethink the nature and purpose of theology.[10] One of the richest chapters he ever wrote addresses the topic.[11] It was also the topic of his "extraordinary inaugural address"[12] as professor of missions.[13] In these two places, and in a number of others scattered throughout his large literary corpus,[14] Conn challenges certain traditional ways of doing theology and suggests a new course. His thinking was decades ahead of his time and deserves careful attention.

Global and Ecclesial Context

Conn sets his discussion in global and ecclesial context. This new context calls for a new course for theology and theologizing. He wrote almost four decades ago and so

9. Harvie M. Conn, "The Missionary Task of Theology: A Love/Hate Relationship?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 7.

10. This article is the reworking of a chapter in a book to be published in South Korea co-authored with Kuk Won Shin entitled *A Gift Worth Preserving: The Legacy of Harvie Conn for Today.* Moreover, Conn has been helping us at Missional Training Center to rethink the nature and purpose of theology as we forge a missional curriculum for theological education.

11. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 209–260.

12. Gornik, "Legacy," 215.

13. Conn, "Missionary Task of Theology," 1–21.

14. Other noteworthy discussions of theology by Conn include "Contextual Theologies: The Problem of Agendas," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52, no. 1–2 (1990): 51–63; "Contextualization: Where Do We Begin?" in *Evangelicals and Liberation*, ed. Carl E. Armerding (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 90–119; "Contextualization: A New Dimension for Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (January 1978): 39–46; "Theologies of Liberation," in *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, 3rd rev. ed., ed. Stanley Gundry and Alan Johnson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 327–434.

issues have changed. However, there are two aspects of the context he sketched that remain important for today.

The first is the shift of the Christian axis from the global North and West to the South and East, from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This shift is much better known today. When Conn wrote over three decades ago it was the best-kept secret of missiologists. His extensive missionary experience in South Korea, and his extensive involvement working with theologians and churches of the majority world, challenged his own Western ethnocentric biases. Their cultural and political situation along with their experience of deep social and economic deprivation set a different context for theology. They raised different questions and offered compelling critiques of Western theology. This new setting of the global church raises the question: How do various cultural contexts and diverse contextual theologies reshape the theological enterprise?

The second feature is the growth of serious self-evaluation taking place in the evangelical theological community as it is released from the grip of the Enlightenment on theology. Various evangelical theologians were questioning whether the formulations used to protect biblical authority had imported alien assumptions. For many, including theologians, missiologists, and Third World leaders, it seemed that idolatrous Enlightenment presuppositions lurked beneath the surface of common theological methodology, of epistemology, and of theological formulations. The rationalism of the West, for example, reduced the Bible to a system of theological propositions. Conn queries, "Have we propositionalized revelation into an acultural vacuum?"[15] Have we adopted an Enlightenment view of timeless propositional truth to guard the universal and transcultural authority of the Bible? Have we protected the authority of Scripture by lifting the Bible out of the very cultural contexts in which it has come to us? And how has that shaped our hermeneutical task? Have we neglected our cultural horizon when we have approached the text of Scripture? And is this what has led to the importation of Enlightenment assumptions? Are we unaware of the complexity of the hermeneutical task of merging two cultural horizons—ours and Scriptures? How will taking cultural context more seriously, both in our theological formulations and in our interpretation of Scripture, shape a new course in theology?

Historical Perspectives

Conn believes that in times of its greatest glory theology has always been contextual reflection *in* mission and *on* mission. It takes seriously both the universal truth of the gospel and the missional vocation of the church in the various cultures of the world. It is from this standpoint—gospel, mission, and the church in many cultures—that he offers insights on historical theology.

15. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 215.

Conn's point of reference is John Calvin's "missionary theologizing."[16] Calvin was an example of missionary theology because "he tried to apply the gospel to his own time and place."[17] He struggled and wrestled with the gospel in its original cultural context until he could hear the biblical author speak to Calvin's own time and place. Calvin radically departed from the scholastic origins of theology as an academic discipline in the twelfth and thirteenth century universities. Then theology was in the grip of Aristotle's philosophical approach to truth that sought objective theological knowledge by means of abstract definitions. In this approach, truth is lifted above history and shorn of all context and relationships—God is defined in his essence, for example, rather than in his acts in history or in his covenantal relationship with humankind and the world. Calvin's approach confronts this abstract approach to theology with a more pastoral and contextual concern.

Conn believes that Reformed theology lost these insights of a missionary theology in the years that followed Calvin and returned to this essentialist approach. He cites as an example a theologian popular in his circles—Louis Berkhof. Theology had become again "some sort of comprehensively universal science" that mirrored Aristotle's view of truth rather than Biblical truth. This theological approach is also reflected in the way that creeds are used and understood. "Our creedal formulations, structured to respond to sixteenth-century cultural setting and its problems, lose their historical character as contextual confessions of faith and become cultural universals, having comprehensive validity in all times and settings. . . . What we are concerned with is how we have diminished their historical, contextual character. The creed as a missionary document framed in the uniqueness of a historical moment has too often been remythologized by white paternalism into a universal essence for all times."[18] Conn wants theology to reflect on the gospel as it is deeply rooted in each cultural context faithfully addressing the issues and concerns of that place and time to equip the church for its mission.

He turns to a fascinating line-up of theologians who have begun to challenge the scholastic paradigm. He mentions G.C. Berkouwer's pastoral method as one example of theology that moves beyond the essentializing approach to theology. Berkouwer is concerned to hear Scripture as the address of God in context rather than a book of abstract and timeless truths. Similarly, John Frame defines theology as "simply the application of Scripture to all areas of life."[19] Such a definition makes context central to theology. Conn reaches all the way back to 1894 to quote the great Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck who attributes the misery of the American

16. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 217. Conn did his Th.M. thesis at Westminster on John Calvin's theology.

17. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 217.

18. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 221.

19. John M. Frame, *Van Til: The Theologian* (Philipsburg, NJ: Pilgrim, 1976), 25. Quoted in Conn, *Eternal Word*, 220.

Presbyterian Churches to a theological uniformity that hinders ongoing renewal and thwarts diverse theological expressions arising out of varying contexts.[20]

Conn adds to these theologians the voices of Third World church leaders. They are critical of theology that is "the construction of a logically coherent system, organized around a Western historical agenda insisted upon as universal by the Western church." They have discovered that "systematic theology is not simply a coherent arrangement of supracultural universals. It is a compilation of the Western white history of dogma. And that history, in the process of compilation, has lost its missiological thrust."[21]

Two-Thirds World theologians understand better than Western theologians that theology is both contextual and missional.[22] And so, they have rightly resisted the universal claims made for Western theology. Of course, the theological systems of the West are deeply contextual as well. It is just that Western theologians who adopt a scholastic method lose sight of this and claim comprehensive universality for their contextual theologies. And many leaders from the non-Western churches will rightly have none of it.

Four Characteristics of Faithful Theologizing

What kind of theology did Conn hope to see? The first clue is to note his distinction between theology and theologizing, and for his preference for the term "theologizing." Theology indicates a finished product while theologizing refers to the ongoing task of doing theology in each place and time. Of course, the activity (theologizing) will always issue in the result (theology). Yet the problem is that using the term theology can give the wrong impression that our task is done by simply appropriating a theology formed once and for all in the past. It is "nothing less than taking a living, vital tradition, drowning it in the embalming fluid of scholastic objectivity and then presenting it to the student as the 'real thing.'"[23] By contrast, at the heart of Conn's concern is that theologizing is an ongoing task in every context—in fact, that is its very nature.

What are the characteristics of faithful theologizing? Certainly, first and foremost, theology must be *biblical*. He highlights Calvin's "battle cry of *sola*

20. Herman Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5, no. 17 (January 1894): 23. This article can be found online: https://commons.ptsem.edu/id/presbyterianrefo5171warf-dmd002 (accessed 29 January 2022). Quoted in Conn, *Eternal Word*, 222. Bavinck makes even stronger statements about the need for a contextual theology in his "Foreword" to *The Wonderful Works of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), xxxii–xxxiii.

21. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 222–23.

22. Conn, "Contextual Theologies," 61–62.

23. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 303.

Scriptura"[24] and then refers to the uniqueness of the Reformed faith as "*sola et tota Scriptura* (Scripture alone and all of Scripture)."[25] Theology must first be "rooted in biblical revelation" while "addressing our real contexts."[26] Scriptural rootedness undergirds all else. But Conn's concern is that theology must be biblical in more than its *content*; it must also follow the Bible in the *way* it speaks the truth.[27] An Aristotelian approach to truth that abstracts truths from their historical contexts as well as their creational and covenantal relationships must be challenged by the way Scripture comes to us in a redemptive-historical narrative.

All theology would claim and strive to be biblical, of course. And much theology would even want to attend to the Scriptures as the true story of God's mighty historical acts to restore his creation. And so, the term "missionary" becomes important for Conn to indicate something more. He speaks of the Calvin's "missionary theology" and "missionary theologizing."[28] But what is packed into that adjective "missionary"? Today there is much discussion about missional theology. How is Conn using the term? A careful reading reveals three further characteristics.

Theology should be *formational*. Theology cannot be reduced to passing along accurate information although it will not be less than that. Theology must have power to form and equip God's people for their missional calling. He states that the "ultimate test of any theological discourse, after all, is not only erudite precision but also transformative power." He then quotes Latin American theologian Orlando Costas, "It is a question of whether or not theology can articulate the faith in a way that is not only intellectually sound but spiritually energizing, and therefore, capable of leading the people of God to be transformed in their way of life and to commit themselves to God's mission in the world."[29]

Faithful theologizing will be *contextual*. Theology is contextual in two senses: "Theology *speaks out of* the historical context; and theology must *speak to* that context."[30] Theology must be addressed to the current issues that churches face in their missional calling. One might rephrase a popular comment by Martin Luther: "If your theology deals with all aspects of Scripture with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time you are not doing theology at all." Theology, which operates with an unexamined understanding of truth as timeless, will pass off a contextual theology from another time or place as universal theology. Yet this

24. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 216.

25. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 223.

26. Conn, "Contextual Theologies," 63.

27. My colleague Michael Williams speaks helpfully of the *pedagogy* of Scripture. Theology is not just biblical if it faithfully reflects the propositional content of Scripture; it must also present that truth *the way* Scripture does.

28. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 217.

29. Orlando Costas, "Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World," *TSF Bulletin* 9, no, 1 (September–October 1985): 10. Quoted in Conn, "*Contextual Theologies*," 63.

30. Conn, "*Contextual Theologies*," 61. My emphases.

is an illusion born of a Greek view of truth where one misunderstands theology to be an "abstractionist task, a searching for essences untouched by the realities of the cultural context."[31] Theology is always contextual; it brings the enduring light of Scripture to bear on the church's mission in a particular setting.

The final mark is that theologizing is *missionary*. Conn uses the term "missionary" in two different senses. The first is a broader use that refers to theology in its *goal* to equip the church for its mission. In this case missionary theology is also formational and contextual. The second and more narrow use of "missionary" refers to the *content* of theology that takes seriously the central thread of the biblical story that the church has a vocation to make known the gospel to the nations. Much theological orthodoxy lacks this orientation to the world. And so, missional theology will be a gadfly to theology insisting that it constantly attend to the scriptural theme "among the nations" at every point.[32] "Missiology stands by to interrupt the theological conversation at every significant moment with the words *among the nations*."[33] The task of the theology must take account of the missional vocation of the church amidst the nations.

Six Criteria for Faithful Theologizing

The most creative and substantial contribution Conn makes to a new course in theology and theologizing is found in the six criteria he sets out for faithful theologizing. Each of these criteria presses his concerns for a biblical, formational, contextual, and missionary theology from different perspectives.

Biblical-Theological

The first criterion for theology is that it must be biblical-theological. By biblical-theological Conn refers to a theological discipline that, in the Dutch Calvinist tradition of Herman Ridderbos and Geerhardus Vos, traces the progressive unfolding of revelation in the history of redemption. Conn notes John Murray's concern about the "tendency to abstraction" [34] in much systematic theology, that is, the "tendency to dehistoricize, to arrive at 'timeless' formulations in the sense of topically oriented universals."[35] In fact, he wonders if systematic theology has become "so captive to the encumbrances of Western categories and methodologies that we must now . . .

31. Conn, "Contextual Theologies," 59.

32. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 224.

33. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 306.

34. John Murray, "Systematic Theology," in *The New Testament Student and Theology*, John H. Skilton, ed. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 30.

35. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 225.

discontinue its use."[36] He sees the appropriation of a biblical-theological approach as an effective antidote to theology as a universal comprehensive science.

With his appropriation of biblical theology, Conn is challenging two assumptions of much Western systematic theology. The first is that truth is found in timeless theological ideas that somehow stand above history and are shorn of any cultural context. And second, the Bible is a dogmatic handbook filled with such theological ideas. The kernels of timeless theology are wrapped in cultural husks. Over against this Conn argues that truth is found precisely in God's mighty acts in history especially in Jesus Christ and that the Bible is a book that records these events as he moves history toward its goal of restoration. It is a book of redemptive-history not a book of theological truths.

Biblical theology thus provides a more faithful way of doing theology. It is more sensitive to the dynamic and narrative character of truth since revelation is not ideas but historical events. Biblical theology can do justice both to the unity of truth and the diversity of the human settings in which that truth is contextualized. Unity is not found in a universal system in Scripture. Rather that unity is found in the person of Jesus Christ and the events of his life, death, and resurrection as the climactic center of a comprehensive story. The redemptive-historical narrative unfolds in four stages: hidden and promised in the Old Testament, fully revealed in Christ, *made known in all the cultures of the world*, and finally consummated at his return.[37] The key is the third stage between Jesus's resurrection and the consummation characterized by mission and contextualization—"made known in all the cultures of the world."

The key to faithful theologizing is eschatology, mission and contextualization. The canonical diversity of the New Testament witness is found in its contextualized witness to the finished work of Christ at this already-not yet stage of redemptive history. We live in the same era as the apostles, and so we can look to see how they worked with the gospel and did theology. Contextualization of the gospel in various settings was constituent to their apostolic task; it is an activity that precisely characterizes this third stage of redemptive history—"made known to the cultures of the world." Contextualization is necessarily characteristic of this period: "Contextualization then is covenant activity taking place between the 'already' of redemption accomplished in Christ and the 'not yet' of redemption to be consummated in Christ."[38]

The New Testament writers were concerned to make known the work of Jesus Christ in particular cultural settings. And so are we! We share the same subject (Christ) and the same methodology (making known Christ in various cultural settings). With the New Testament writers "we share a common contextual, hermeneutic interest."[39] As Peter and Paul brought the gospel to bear on various settings to form the church

36. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 228.
37. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 226. My emphasis.
38. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 226.
39. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 227.

for its missional calling, so our theology is to do the same. "Paul's 'task theology' is a biblical pattern for our own theologizing."[40]

This era of redemptive history is fraught with danger. Contextual theologizing "reminds us of the ease with which our perceptions of the gospel can be deeply influenced by unconscious impositions of cultural and sociostructural perspectives on the biblical data."[41] Perhaps this is the main reason a scholastic approach is so enticing; it seems to protect against this risk of cultural distortion. It gives the illusion of keeping truth pure from the relativities of culture and history. And yet this does not protect against accommodation but rather mistakenly universalizes a single contextual theology. Nevertheless, the perils associated with attempts to faithfully contextualize the gospel in various cultural settings should not lead to timidity or avoidance of the task; contextualization is unavoidable and the only way forward for a faithful theology. It should bring humility with our own formulations since only the Bible has completely faithful contextualizations. And it should also bring patience and generosity with others—"Let him who is without ideology cast the first stone."[42]

While we share the same redemptive-historical era, the same gospel, and the same contextualizing task as the New Testament writers, Conn warns against a total identification of our theologizing with theirs. Our theologizing is dependent upon and derivative of theirs. Theirs is God-breathed and completely faithful while ours is always tentative and in need of correction. Yet the New Testament authors provide a model of theologizing that can help us escape the cultural captivity of Western theology.

Covenantal

The second criterion for theologizing is that it is covenantal. Conn is concerned to counter an understanding of theology that has been affected by the rationalism of Western culture which makes truth a matter of propositionally correct statements. It stands as objective truth that is free, not only of a particular context, but also of any kind of response. Truth as rationally exact doctrinal assertions then calls forth a theory-praxis dichotomy so the abstract truth may become relevant to us today by way of application as a second step. The propositionally accurate doctrines form the theory side of the dichotomy; what must now be done is to apply them to a particular setting. Theologizing then falls prey to this dichotomy as it is reduced to merely the theoretical side—formulating true theological statements. While this may be partially correct it is a long way from a biblical understanding of truth. He counters this comprehension of truth with the notion of covenant.

40. Conn, "Contextual Theologies," 62.
41. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 226.
42. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 229.

There are two closely related dimensions to the way Conn employs covenantal to characterize theology. Truth is always *relational*. That is, the Bible is the personal address of God to humanity; it is "the call of the covenant Suzerain for the expression of our covenant faithfulness in a God-centered way of living."[43] This is precisely Berkouwer's concern to which Conn refers earlier. Berkouwer protests an objectivist understanding of Scripture and counters it in his theological method. "The single most influential theme in all of Berkouwer's theology is generally considered to be the co-relation of faith and revelation. Berkouwer's thinking constantly moves between the two poles of the believing man and the revealing God. . . . Berkouwer is not concerned with the Bible as a source of knowledge and information concerning divine matters, but as the word from the living God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ addressing us. This means that from the side of man there must be a faith to co-relate with this divine address."[44] Our first response to Scripture is not rational comprehension of theological propositions but faith, love, and obedience to God's address. Theology works within and as part of this dynamic of God's address and our faithful covenant response.

Truth is not only relational but also *transformational*. Truth is not merely the conveyance of information that must then be applied to life as a second step. Rather God's covenant address demands a faithful response. Truth is not just about getting our doctrine straight and then once we do, figuring out how it might be applied. Rather it is about reflecting on God's address amidst our living, acting, and doing the truth within each setting. Theology is not an abstract discipline but one that conscientizes the Christian community to live faithfully in their place. Conscientization is "the awakening of the Christian conscience to reflection and action in God's world" under the comprehensive authority of the Scriptures.[45]

This has implications for our theologizing. It will mean taking our praxis seriously as the context for theological reflection. Conn addresses two misunderstandings of the word "praxis." The first is that of Liberation Theology which it is indebted to Marx's economic and dialectical interpretation of history. What liberation theology has right is that all theological reflection is done in a particular context with a commitment to one side in the struggle of history. Marxism misinterprets the ultimate struggle of history as economic.[46] Theological reflection on the gospel shapes a people to faithfully take the side of God's kingdom in the cosmic battle with the kingdom of darkness for creation. The second misunderstanding is to use praxis as a synonym for

43. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 229.

44. John Timmer, "G. C. Berkouwer: Theologian of Confrontation and Co-Relation," in *Reformed Journal* 19, no. 10 (December 1969): 18.

45. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 310.

46. Harvie Conn, "The Mission of the Church," in *Evangelicals and Liberation* ed. Carl E. Armerding (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 73.

practice or application that preserves the theory-practice dichotomy. Theology is the first theoretical step and praxis becomes the applicatory second step to our practice.

Over against this Conn defines praxis in terms of commitment to a full-orbed covenantal obedience situated in a particular cultural context. That is the praxis out of which true theology comes. Keeping covenant is "reflective commitment in praxis."[47] "Reflective" constitutes the theological dimension. Following Orlando Costas, theology "is rather a reflection that takes place in the concrete missionary situation, as part of the church's missionary obedience to and participation in God's mission and is itself actualized in that situation."[48] Theology, then, has the goal of forming a people by making them aware of what it means to be faithful to the gospel: "theologizing becomes more than the effective communication of the content of the gospel to the cultural context; it becomes the process of the covenant conscientization of the whole people of God to the hermeneutical obligations of the gospel."[49] Theology arises out of a particular missionary situation in which we are committed to missionary obedience, and it has the goal of shaping the people of God for their missionary calling.

Theologizing is the whole process that studies and reflects on Scripture out of a commitment to God's mission in a particular setting to shape God's people for their missional calling. Thus, theologizing is never finished: "Theologizing is the task of each new generation standing in its particular moment in history. It searches the Scriptures in order to discern the will of God and strives to receive guidance on its way toward the obedient life that must be pursued within the concrete issues of the world's concrete cultures."[50]

Culture-Specific

A third norm for faithful theologizing is that it is culture-specific. If theology is contextual and formational, then it must be relevant in every cultural setting; it must address the people of God living in a specific culture. Conn points to the way that the different canonical Gospels select and arrange historical material to address specific audiences as an example of how biblical authors made the gospel relevant. He comments that again the Scriptures "provide us with a model that calls for contextual rootedness in addressing the Word of God to human cultures."[51]

But the attempt to be relevant raises an enormous tension: how can one be relevant in contextualizing the gospel when it takes form in each culture that is itself deeply idolatrous? The problem here is precisely the eschatological tension of belonging to

47. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 233.

48. Orlando Costas, *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), 8. Quoted in Conn, *Eternal Word*, 232–33.

49. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 231.

50. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 233.

51. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 236.

the new creation but continuing to live in the old age. This is what Lesslie Newbigin calls the "painful tension" in the context of a Christian desire to be faithful in Indian culture when the idolatrous caste system is pervasive and inescapable.[52]

Are there biblical guidelines for resolving this tension? Conn turns to the notion of Christian liberty and the issue of eating meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians (8:1ff; 10:23ff) and Romans (14:1–15:7). In his discussion he draws out two helpful insights. First, there remains much creational good and truth in every culture. Therefore, it is unnecessary and even counterproductive to reject aspects of culture that exhibit the structural good of creation. Second, idolatry has twisted all of culture and created opposition to the gospel. In this case, one must be willing to stand against that true offense to the gospel. Conn works with an underlying distinction between the good creational structures within each culture and its religious and idolatrous misdirection, a distinction that is characteristic of J. H. Bavinck.[53]

Such a distinction between structure and direction is based on Conn's understanding of the relationship between religion and culture dependant on Bavinck. Here we encounter significant insight into a missional understanding culture that is often missed. It is common to see religion as one more cultural activity alongside of others. Conn follows Bavinck in seeing religion as the deepest directional power in culture underlying all other activities and institutions. Bavinck states that "culture is religion made visible; it is religion actualized in the innumerable relations of daily life."[54] Explicating this statement Conn stresses "the core place of religion in the structuring of culture's meaning and usage." Religion is "not an area of life, one among many, but primarily a *direction* of life . . . Religion, then becomes the heart of culture's integrity, its central dynamic as an organism, the totalistic radical response of man-in-covenant to the revelation of God."[55] He offers a diagram with three layers (figure one). The middle layer details the various aspects of human life—their physical, lingual, and aesthetic but also social, rational, economic, etc. functions. The outer layer illustrates that these abilities take cultural form because human beings live in community. This outer layer expresses the concrete institutions, customs, practices, and habits of a culture. The inner core is religion, idolatrous beliefs that shape the various aspects of culture. Religion is a power flowing from the heart that (mis) directs all areas of human culture. For Conn, "worldview dimensions" is the way the

52. Lesslie Newbigin, *A South India Diary* (London: SCM, 1951), 49.

53. The structure-direction distinction is best known from the work of Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). Wolters, according to his own testimony, makes that distinction on the basis of J. H. Bavinck's notion of contextualization.

54. J. H. Bavinck, *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 57.

55. Harvie Conn, "Conversion and Culture: A Theological Perspective with Reference to Korea," in John Stott and Robert Coote, eds., *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 149–150.

religious direction of the heart integrates and shapes all other dimensions of human existence. He writes that a worldview is a "comprehensive belief-framework that colors all of a person's activities. It is a communal direction of the heart, a framework of belief-commitments commonly held by a community of like mind. It includes a person's act of believing, the heart's integrator for all other acts and functions. It includes also the set of beliefs and values flowing from that act of believing."[56]

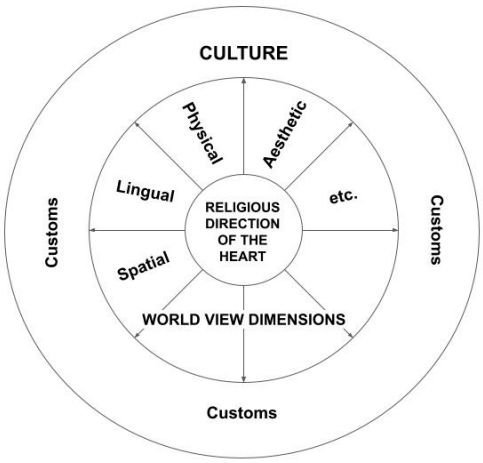

Figure 1. Core Place of Religion

This understanding of culture allows us to see how each aspect of culture is the product of healthy development of creational potential *and at the same time* a product of idolatrous twisting. These must be distinguished even while they are woven together. It is not easy to separate the creational good from the idolatrous direction. A theology that struggles to form the people of God in a particular cultural setting must be engaged in a rigorous dialogue with culture to discern the structure and direction. The dialogical character of all theologizing must be a dialogue not only within the Christian church—where much theologizing has been done—but also a dialogue with the world, "the culture, the religion, the politics, the economics, the social system."[57] It will be a dialogue that struggles to discern the creationally good and the idolatrously deformed in culture. And it is precisely this kind of dialogue that will keep theology fresh and relevant continuing to address the current issues needed to shape the people of God in each context.

56. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 319.

57. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 241 quoting Charles R. Taber, "Limits of Indigenization in Theology," *Missiology* 6, no. 1 (January 1978): 75.

Confessional

The fourth criterion for faithful theologizing is that it is confessional. Conn affirms that theological reflection is an elaboration of our confession of loyalty to Jesus Christ. It both affirms what we believe and does so publicly to the world. Conn narrows his discussion immediately to his own ecclesial context where confession has taken concrete form in the various Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He sees these confessions as examples of theologizing, the articulation and elaboration of confessional loyalty to the gospel.

He is concerned that both the nature of these confessions formed in the *corpus Christianum* and the way the contemporary Reformed churches have received these confessions poses a great danger to faithful theologizing. He affirms the importance of confessions if they are understood in a faithful way. He notes three characteristics of what faithful confessions, and hence faithful theologizing, should be.

The first is the *contextual character* of confessions. "Their richest service," says Conn, "lies in their function of translating the gospel to address the needs of their own day and cultural context. … Creeds, as an expression of the confessional character of all theologizing, are 'historically situational.' They are human acts of confession of God's unchanging good news, addressed to specific human cultural settings."[58] Confessions seek to grasp the message of Scripture in a particular setting, and insofar as they do so they also bear witness to the universal validity of the gospel. The danger is that over time churches who adhere to these confessions minimize their contextual character and maximize their universal dimension. Thus, they become the doctrinal standard for all people in all places at all times.

The second is the *topical* nature of confessions. It is precisely the contextual character of confessions that leads to the specific topics and themes that are treated in the confessions. For example, even though the kingdom of God is the central theme of the entire New Testament there is little attention paid to it by Reformed confessions.[59] The topics treated are those that need to be affirmed, explicated, and defended at that point in history.

The final characteristic of confessions is their *evangelistic focus*. A confession must always be made with an eye on unbelievers; confession is always made amidst the world. To illustrate the way this focus has been lost, Conn adopts a threefold list of the use of confessions: a witness to the world of Christian belief; an instrument to instruct the church in those beliefs; and the test of orthodoxy for members especially leadership. The element of witness to the world—the first use—enjoys greatest prominence in the earliest years of a confession's life but over time it is the last two that come to predominate as the doctrinal standards of an introverted church.

58. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 241.

59. Herman Ridderbos makes same point in "Church, World, Kingdom" in *Justice in the International Economic Order* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1980), 19.

The problem of an evangelistic focus is not found just in the historical appropriation of confessions; the original confessions themselves lack an evangelistic dimension. Framed in the *corpus Christianum* where the horizon of the ends of the earth was eclipsed, the confessions project an image of the church talking with itself rather than the church confessing its faith before the world. As these confessions guide the church, they produce indifference toward mission among those who adhere to the confessions. The evangelistic focus of the church, already lacking in the confessions, fades even more over time. "Creeds and confessions fashioned in a Western *corpus Christianum* and minimizing the evangelistic dimension of theologizing" cannot carry out the theological task of shaping a people for their missional calling.[60] Theologizing that follows in the same path will also be inadequate to the job.

Communal

A fifth requirement for faithful theologizing is that it be communal. Confessing our faith and reflecting theologically on that confession in a particular context is not an individualistic endeavor; rather it is a communal task and process. Conn is concerned here with the looming threat of parochialism—the isolation of theology in one particular culture or socioeconomic class that allows it to become distorted by the idolatry endemic to that particular segment of the church.

He deals with two aspects of a communal dialogue that are especially urgent. The first is a cross-cultural dialogue between churches in various cultures of the world. Specifically, Conn divides the church between the West and non-West or Third World and argues for a dialogue that is mutually enriching and corrective. The second aspect is a dialogue with the poor and those on the margins that will make the needy a fundamental category in theology.

Conn's discussion in the early 1980s reflects a situation different from today. It more commonly known today that the church outside the West surpasses the Western church in numbers and vitality, and further it now has significant spiritual and intellectual resources to challenge, enrich, and correct the West. Nevertheless, we can say with sadness that we are a long way from the mutuality and interdependence needed for such a dialogue. My own experience tells me that many still are unaware of the riches of differing theological traditions outside the West. Conn speaks of a "theological racism"[61] that assumes that Western-style theology is automatically superior and normative among churches in all cultures. Moreover, the problem is not with the West alone; the younger churches have often merely acquiesced to this superiority.

Conn does not want to discourage the churches outside the West from learning from the Western theological tradition. After all, it bears witness to the ecumenical

60. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 246.
61. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 250.

character of the Christian faith and universal truth of the gospel. But this requires a mutually correcting dialogue among the churches from all cultures.

If our confession and theologizing is to be truly communal it must not be only Third World churches that are needed as full dialogue partners; it is also the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. If theology takes seriously the cultural context, then the gospel must address "social, political, and economic questions: wealth and power, power and powerlessness, privilege and oppression, white and non-white. How will theology be done from 'the underside'?"[62]

The problem for many Western evangelicals is that our dualism that sequesters spirituality from these cultural dimensions and our fear of the social gospel renders us incapable of responding to this challenge. Conn turns to Third World evangelicals to teach us the importance of the poor in our theologizing. At this point, his twofold concern for both non-Western churches and for the poor as dialogue partners merge. Specifically, he points to the 1982 *Seoul Declaration: Toward an Evangelical Theology for the Third World* as a shining example of the way theology takes seriously the social, political, and economic structures in theologizing.[63] As the document details the theological agenda in Asia, Africa, and Latin America it is issues of economic injustice, oppression, totalitarian ideologies, poverty, urban growth, consumerism, and the arms race, among other issues, that are at the forefront. Conn asks: "Why, by contrast, do we read so seldom and so late of a similar agenda for doing theology in the West?"[64]

The problem is our economic and social location that deeply affects what we see and know. He asks how the Western church can more deeply identify with the poor and oppressed so that these issues shape our theology. His answer is by seeking solidarity with them. But he also again points to Third World theology: they can point out our limitations and compromised accommodation; they can offer new models of authentic contextualization in this setting; and they can offer new patterns for radical discipleship. If theology in the West is to be protected from an idolatrous parochialism it needs both the non-Western church and the poor as equal dialogue partners.

Prophetic

The final norm for faithful theologizing is that it be prophetic. Theology may not baptize the agendas of human culture but must reflect the inevitable confrontation of culture with the gospel. Since Conn sees the gospel as wide as creation—salvation is the restoration of all things including human culture—and since he also sees the religious core of culture as idolatrously shaping every aspect, there will necessarily be a missionary encounter, a clash between two comprehensive visions of life.

62. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 253.

63. A copy of this document can be found online at http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1983-02/1983-02-064-the.pdf (accessed 29 January 2022).

64. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 254.

"Our hermeneutical quest must challenge the values and standards of the culture in which it is being done that mirror the demonic and dehumanizing forces of sin and rebellion against God."[65]

He borrows a term from liberation theologian Juan Luis Segundo—"hermeneutic of suspicion." A hermeneutic of suspicion brings us to our own contextualization of the gospel with the suspicion that all of us are captive to ideologies. "All of us are captive to ideologies. The task of 'hermeneutical' suspicion is to confront those hidden ideologies."[66]

Scholarly reflection and theologizing are not exempt from our cultural and ideological assumptions. Our hermeneutical methods cannot neutralize their powerful effect. Thus, good theologizing struggles to understand one's own context in order to uncover the underlying idolatrous assumptions that are concealed and have blinded us to what we need to see.

Yet prophetic theology is not just negative—that is, suspicion of our idolatrous assumptions. It is also the positive and hopeful reshaping of our imagination, the re-narrating our lives by the biblical story. We do not dwell on compromising accommodation to cultural idolatry with immobilizing despair but theologize in the confident hope that the gospel may liberate us from bondage to idolatry.

Legacy for the Global Church Today

Today there is a renaissance in theology. A spate of new theologies has rolled off the press in the last decade especially in the Reformed tradition. It seems that our new cultural setting has made more folk aware that there is a need for fresh theologizing. Sadly, many have simply looked backward and been an exercise in reappropriating the theologies of the past. Many of these Reformed theologies are warmed over sixteenth and seventeenth century systems, formulations, and confessions rather than fresh encounters with the text of Scripture in a new day. A contextualized theology of the past is resurrected to provide certainty in times of postmodern uncertainty.

Conn saw clearly the many factors required for new theologizing. But instead of settling for past reiterations he proposed a new course that is faithful to the Bible, relevant to the cultural context, and empowering for the church's mission. I believe that some of his most crucial work is here and that we can learn much from his deep reflection on theologizing.

Perhaps Conn's legacy for the global church can be observed by noting three problems with much theology today. First, it is *not narrative and missional*. The narrative structure of the Christian faith in Scripture is cosmic-communal-personal. Yet this canonical structure is often ignored. Rather systematic theologies are structured on the basis of individual salvation and miss much of the biblical

65. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 258.
66. Conn, *Eternal Word*, 259.

story. It is simply inattentive to the narrative, eschatological, and missional shape of the Christian faith. Conn's criteria for theologizing will go a long in correcting this reduction.

Second, much current theology is *not dialogical*. It is based on a faulty notion of truth and consequent epistemology. Truth is found in timeless ideas and the theological method enables the theologian to mine these truths and organize them into a self-evident system of universal and comprehensive truth. There is no recognition that the very system already reflects the cultural interests of the West. But when one believes that truth is timeless and the mind capable of simply producing a system that reflects that truth, there is no need for correction. The theologian feels no need to dialogue with theology from other cultures, from other theological traditions, from other times in history, and with the poor and marginalized for the sake of enrichment and critique. Yet it is precisely here where we'll see our blind spots and receive new insight into Scripture.

Finally, much current theology is *not contextual*. It is still fighting the same battles and not current ones. For example, the Christological questions of the first few centuries often dominate: how can Jesus be both God and man? We cannot lose or forget what we have learned from those early years of struggle. Rather in our pluralistic environment today questions of how to speak of the finality of Jesus, for example, are the urgent questions that should shape our Christology.

When we eschew contextualization, we lose the opportunity to confront the idols that shape our theology. I have taught a course for many years on non-Western theology. Many Asian, African, and Latin American theologians share common critiques of Western theology: it is rationalistic, individualistic, spiritualistic, and dualistic. But if our theologies are not dialogical and prophetic, we are in no position to hear these critiques.

Conn has been able to combine two things that are unusual: a historically orthodox approach to theology (he was, after all, ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a small and quite conservative confessionalist Presbyterian denomination) along with a recognition that we must always be contextualizing. This means constantly wrestling with the text of Scripture, and in the process reworking this tradition in new situations for the sake of faithfulness to our missional calling. Conn's insightful reflection on theologizing points to a faithful way forward today.

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A Rose Is Not *Just* a Rose: Re-integrating Faith with Learning in the Post-Christian Academy[1]

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Abstract: The integration of the Christian faith with learning has been a subject of discussion in Christian higher education for several decades. One pressing question is exactly how to accomplish this integration in every discipline of the Christian university, from the humanities to the sciences. This has proven to be somewhat difficult. A primary reason for this difficulty is due to the acceptance of what George Marsden calls "methodological secularism." This paper offers four suggestions for overcoming methodological secularism seemingly entrenched in Christian universities in order to integrate successfully Christian faith with learning across all disciplines.

Introduction

In commentating on Bonaventure's view of education, Arthur Holmes states, "A rose is not just a rose when it exists to praise its maker."[2] From a Christian perspective, a rose is much more than its physical attributes to be studied. It is a work of God, and its beauty reflects and points to the triune Creator of the universe. This stands in contrast to the naturalist's perspective, which views a rose as merely a material object to be studied for its extension, color, and other like physical attributes. In short, when Christians study the natural world, they view it through the prism of the Christian worldview.

This approach to education is what is meant by the contemporary dictum "the integration of faith and learning." Although this phrase is rather recent, Christian thinkers have long held that education is a *worldview* issue (although the term "worldview" is a rather recent invention), that is, that Christians approach education *as Christians*, not as naturalists or from some other worldview. Throughout much of the history of the church, Christians would have thought it unnatural, perhaps even unthinkable, to bracket Christian theological presuppositions and understandings of

1. The phrase "a rose is not *just* a rose" is taken from Arthur Holmes, *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 44. Emphasis added.

2. Holmes, *Building*, 44.

the world when studying God's creation. Theology has something to say not just about God, sin, redemption, and restoration, but something about the rose God created and, indeed, *all* creation.

This, however, is where a problem is encountered in contemporary education. As the phrase "integration of faith and learning" itself indicates, a uniquely Christian approach to learning has largely fallen by the wayside. As human history marched forward, particularly in the West, education became primarily secular, devoid of any Christian worldview. Science became a study of merely the physical universe apart from any pursuit of discovering implications it might have for Christian theology. Mathematics increasingly became viewed as merely "crunching numbers" and leaving out all religious and moral opinions. Even much of the humanities became disconnected from the Christian worldview.

How can this problem be resolved? This is the question of integrating faith with learning that has been a focus of conversation among Christian educators for several decades. How can a Christian university be successful at integrating (or shall we say *reintegrating*?) faith with learning? Numerous answers have been given, but they have largely left unaddressed a primary problem and how to overcome that problem, namely, methodological secularism.[3] In this brief study, the intent is to

3. For example, see Elizabeth C. Sites, Fernando L. Garzon, Frederick A. Milacci, and Barbara Boothe, "A Phenomenology of the Integration of Faith and Learning," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 37*,* no. 1 (2009): 28-38; Joshua D. Reichard, "From Indoctrination to Initiation: A Non-coercive Approach to Faith-Learning Integration," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 17*,* no. 1 (2013): 285-99; James Riley Estep, Jr., "The Church and College in Culture: A Paradigm for Faith-Learning Integration in the Bible College Curriculum," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 2, (Fall 1999): 191-208; Bruce Narramore, "Barriers to the Integration of Faith and Learning in Christian Graduate Training Programs in Psychology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 20, no. 2 (1992): 119-126; Ken Badley, "Clarifying 'Faith-Learning Integration': Essentially Contested Concepts and the Concept-Conception Distinctioan," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 13, no. 1 (2009): 7-17; Perry L. Glanzer, "Why We Should Discard 'the Integration of Faith and Learning': Rearticulating the Mission of the Christian Scholar," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 12*,* no. 1 (2008): 41-51; Lawrence Ressler, "The Integration of Athletics and Faith," *Direction* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 91-102; Laurie R. Matthias, "Professors Who Walk Humbly with Their God: Exemplars in the Integration of Faith and Learning at Wheaton College," *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 12, no. 2 (2008): 145-57; Michael Sherr, George Huff, and Mary Curran, "Student Perceptions of Salient Indicators of Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL): The Christian Vocation Model," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 16 (2007): 15-33; William Hasker, "Faith-Learning Integration: An Overview," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21, no. 3 (1992): 234-48; Ken Badley, "Where Does Faith-Integration Happen?" in Marsha Fowler and Maria A. Pacino, eds., *Faith Integration and Schools of Education* (Indianapolis, IN: Precedent Press, 2012), 57-69.

One notable exception is Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen who addresses this concern but refers to it as the ABC rule, "Anything but Christianity." See M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Richard L. Gorsuch, H. Newton Malony, Jr., S. Bruce Narramore, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "Dialogue, Embodiment, and the Unity of Faith and Learning: A Conversation on Integration in a Postmodern Age," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 25, no. 4 (2006): 331-37, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "Five Uneasy Questions, or: Will Success Spoil Christian Psychologists?" *Crux* 34, no. 3 (1998): 30-38. See also Corina R. Kaul, Kimberly A. Hardin, and A. Alexander Beaujean, "Predicting Faith Integration of Faith and Learning," *Christian Higher Education* 16, no. 3 (2017): 172-87.

suggest that the problem with integrating faith with learning is due to Christians, knowingly or unknowingly, accepting what George Marsden calls "methodological secularism," and this method must be jettisoned first to be successful at reintegrating faith with learning.

A Rose is Just a Rose: Secularization of the Academy

How did the problem of integrating faith with learning arise in the first place? Christians have not always seemed to have had this difficulty. Education was at one time robustly Christian, whether studying biology, math, astronomy, or theology proper. In maintaining the rose metaphor, it can be said that Christian learning went from seeing that a rose is *not* just a rose to a rose is *just* a rose.

A Brief History of Christian Education

In a very real sense, higher education was birthed by Christianity. It is true that the ancient philosophers of Greece, especially Plato and Aristotle, are to be recognized for their academies, but it was the Christian church which brought higher education into its prime. Many books and studies trace these roots with incontrovertible historical evidence, and so this is not really a controversial idea.[4]

What is most striking, however, is that many scholars, including Christian academicians, have forgotten about this rich history which made education a uniquely *Christian* endeavor. George Marsden notes that "the peculiarity of the contemporary situation" is that "Protestants have forsaken a long tradition of leadership in higher education" and more "striking" is that "they have forsaken it so recently and forgotten it so completely."[5]

In early colonial America, for example, Christians founded universities, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, as training grounds for pastoral leadership in the local church. In particular, Harvard was founded in 1636 to instruct students "to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning." Harvard's motto reflected this mission as well: *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae.*[6]

4. See, for example, James Hannam, *God's Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of Modern Science* (London: Icon Books, 2009); Jonathan Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us? How It Shaped the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001); Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).

5. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11.

6. Harvard University, "GSAS Christian Community Shield and 'Veritas' History," March 14,

Such an emphasis was not relegated merely to pastoral training; the entire educational endeavor was viewed to be a study of God and his works. This was seen by the fact that, as Marsden points out,

> for centuries in Protestant countries, including the Protestant colonies in America, the clergy typically were the best-educated persons in a town or village. In this country, until well into the nineteenth century higher education remained primarily a function of the church, as it always had been in Western civilization. Most educators were clergymen,and the profession of professor was not clearly differentiated from that of minister. . . . Until recently Protestants and their heirs were overwhelmingly dominant in setting the standards for American universities.[7]

Such an observation may seem somewhat foreign or striking to some. Such a reaction, however, as Marsden notes elsewhere, is "one index of how secular the current scene has become."[8]

Secularization of the University

How did higher education become a secular endeavor? To be sure, exactly how education ought to be designed, whether secular or Christian, has always been disputed in America.[9] The overwhelming view, however, has been to approach learning from a Christian view, especially in light of the fact that education was primarily birthed by Christians. How did this change?

The answer to this question is not monolithic. Changes in approaches to education have numerous and complex factors. This is just the nature of history, philosophy, and ideas of any kind. This does not mean, however, that primary influences cannot be discerned. Many have been observed: technological advancements, belief in non-sectarianism, industrialization, pluralism, and theological liberalism, among others.[10] There are, however, two primary and significant influences: the Enlightenment and modern science.

The Enlightenment. Probably the foundational influence of the secularization of the academy was the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was many things, but one of its major features was a shift of human thought to epistemology, in particular the

2022, http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~gsascf/shield-and-veritas-history/. Michael Hamilton gives a brief overview of the secularization of a number of universities and argues that Harvard led the way. See Michael S. Hamilton, "A Higher Education," *Christianity Today* 49 (2005): 31-2.

7. Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization*, 10.

8. Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization*, 4.

9. The Founding Fathers, for example, did not seem to agree upon this. Thomas Jefferson was for a secular, state education while others, like John Adams and Benjamin Rush, were for a religious, state education. For a short, good discussion on such differences, see, for example, Marsden, *Soul*, 68ff.

10. See Marsden and Longfield, *Secularization* and Marsden, *Soul*.

search for the correct method to ascertain certitude of knowledge. This search had two main streams: the continent of Europe primarily focused upon human reason while Britain focused upon empiricism.

At the risk of sounding simplistic and reductionistic (but for the sake of brevity), the Enlightenment overall resulted in jettisoning revelation, or theology, as a legitimate source of knowledge. For our purposes, the relevant school of thought is British empiricism for which American education is largely based upon. British empiricism concluded that certitude of knowledge is gained by using sense experience (which tied itself nicely with the rise of modern science as we will see in the next subsection). Therefore, it was concluded that if humans desired to learn anything, it must be by empirical evaluations and observations, not by theological axioms that have no connection to the physical world, or so it was thought by many.

Since theology was no longer viewed as a legitimate source of knowledge, religion (as well as metaphysics) came to be viewed as a subjective inquiry and thus a dead end. As such, there was no room for such an endeavor in American universities. Education came to be viewed as the search for certitude of knowledge upon which the only method that such could be obtained was empiricism. If it could not be empirically observed or evaluated, then it was not knowledge. In short, then, "the relegation of religion to the periphery of American universities was justified on essentially Enlightenment grounds."[11] A secular approach to learning rather than a Christian theological approach was, therefore, more appropriate, which was conducive to the burgeoning field of modern science.

Modern Science. Science as we know it today blossomed during the seventeenth century. In particular, the influence of Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) cannot be overstated as he laid out the importance of induction rather than deduction when studying the physical world. This method, which later would become highly influential to the development of the so-called "scientific method," was consonant with Enlightenment empiricist epistemology. It was also viewed by many to overthrow the "dogmatism of deduction," which was often associated with the traditional approach to science, learning in general, and the method in theological studies. As such, some came to blame theology for curtailing scientific and technological progress. Deductive theology had to be disposed of.

Although this view of Christian theology, or religion, is historically incorrect,[12] this view that Christianity bogged down learning became a highly accepted and

11. Marsden, *Soul*, 429.

12. For a historical analysis of the incorrectness of the war thesis, see the following works: Hannam, *God's Philosophers*; Stark, *Victory*; David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Gary B. Ferngren, ed., *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* 2nd ed (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2017); Jeff Hardin, Ronald L. Numbers, and Ronald A. Binzley, eds., *The Warfare between Science and Religion: The Idea That Wouldn't Die* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2018); David C. Lindberg

enduring one over time in academia. In fact, the Christian worldview came to be understood as impeding science. No other works exemplified this view more than John William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) and Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896).[13] It could be argued that these works are what laid the ground for the idea that religion and science are at war.[14] Draper proclaimed, prematurely, "Religion must relinquish that imperious, that domineering position which she has so long maintained against Science."[15] The acceptance of this thesis is arguably the decisive factor for putting a wedge between the Christian worldview and learning.[16]

If science, and learning in general, were to be profitable, then the method of science had to be adopted to avoid the entanglements of any kind of theological or worldview system. This meant that science had to avoid any religious ideas whatsoever to maintain its objectivity and to obtain knowledge of the world. By definition, then, science became secular and adopted a method which Marsden calls "methodological secularism." He explains this method and contrasts it with religious beliefs this way:

> Many tasks are done most efficiently by isolating and objectifying them. . . . In effect, one creates a mechanism for addressing the issue and applies this to a practical problem. Religious considerations play little if any role in the mechanism itself. Hence if one is considering how to improve the efficiency of the steam engine, information derived from religious belief would not be expected to affect the construction of the mechanism. . . . New universities were especially devoted to the service of this technological ideal. . . . Thus, when entering the laboratory, pious Christians were expected to leave their

and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Scott E. Hendrix, *Gods, Philosophers, and Scientists: Religion and Science in the West* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Oxford Southern, 2019); Richard G. Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900 From Copernicus to Darwin*, Greenwood Guides to Science and Religion (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004).

13. John William Draper, *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (Farnborough, Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1970), and Andrew Dickson White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (N.p.: Hansebooks, 2017).

14. See, for example, Marsden, *Secularization*, 14-15 and Theodore J. Cabal and Peter J. Rasor II, *Controversy of the Ages: Why Christians Should Not Divide Over the Age of the Earth* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017), 17-20.

15. Cited in Cabal and Rasor, *Controversy*, 17.

16. This continued "war thesis" is illustrated today by Jerry Coyne's book *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015). As the title implies, faith is merely subjective, or perspectival, and has nothing to do with facts or knowledge. Science, on the other hand, deals with facts and gives knowledge. This is the "secular-sacred split" which Francis Schaeffer described last century: reality consists of an *upper story of value* and a *lower story of fact* and never the twain shall meet (for a contemporary discussion of this, see Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004). *Value* is that which is only opinion whereas *fact* is that which is objective, unbiased, and neutral. Science is thus knowledge; theology (or worldview) is mere opinion.

> religious beliefs at the door. . . . Diversities of religious beliefs also made it particularly important for scholarly cooperation that their substance be kept out of the laboratories. Since the laboratory became a key metaphor and model for all advanced intellectual work, this ideal was extended throughout the university.[17]

To state it another way, methodological secularism is the approach to learning that brackets anything religious. As Marsden succinctly states elsewhere, methodological secularism "takes place when, in order to obtain greater scientific objectivity or to perform a technical task, one decides it is better to suspend religious beliefs."[18]

With the help of Enlightenment epistemology and the rise of modern science viewed to be at war with theology, learning became a secular endeavor. No longer was the Christian worldview allowed to be incorporated into learning. It, along with all religious perspectives, had to be checked at the classroom door. The Draper-White war thesis became established orthodoxy in the university (and in culture generally). Christianity and religious views were understood to be "unscientific" and even "socially disruptive."[19] In effect, today a rose is *just* a rose and nothing more.

Assumptions About the Rose: Obstacles to (Re)Integrating Faith With Learning

The adoption of methodological secularism (MS) in learning, and specifically in universities, was monumental. It was a *paradigm shift* in education, or what we could call today a "worldview shift." The adoption of MS transformed education into a secular endeavor. Learning was no longer about learning from a Christian perspective; it was about learning from a secular perspective.

Approaching learning with this method has led to serious consequences for Christian education which now presents obstacles to the idea of "integrating faith with learning." Marsden comments that the "triumph" of MS was universities being segmented into multiple disciplines in which most people view to have nothing to do with the big questions in life.[20] In other words, the Christian university has little understanding what mathematics, psychology, biology, chemistry, etc. have to do with the Christian worldview. Hence the struggle of "integrating faith with learning."

In fact, MS has become so entrenched in the university culture that many Christians do not know where to begin to integrate faith with learning, or what obstacles that must be overcome in order to *re*-integrate faith with learning. At this

17. Marsden, *Soul*, 156.

18. Marsden, *Secularization*, 18.

19. Marsden, *Soul*, 429.

20. George M. Marsden, "The Soul of the American University: A Historical Overview," in George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, ed., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 33.

point, it will be helpful to elucidate some of these obstacles, or the consequences of universities accepting MS. To be sure, the discussion that follows is not exhaustive; it will merely highlight what appears to be some of the primary obstacles. The final section will turn to some possible suggestions on how to overcome these obstacles, and MS in particular, so that faith can once again become a part of learning.

Obstacle One: Admitting the Problem

The first step in overcoming any problem is recognizing and admitting it. We must first understand that MS and its presuppositions are impeding the integration of faith and learning, yea, making it impossible in many cases.

This obstacle of recognizing and admitting the adoption of MS may seem obvious to some (perhaps many), but to others it may not be noticeable at all, perhaps and especially for those in STEM programs. MS has become so entrenched in the university that faculty and students are often not aware of it.[21] This is why many find it difficult to "integrate faith and learning" and oftentimes even talk about it. Secularism has become the reigning paradigmatic method to learning, and thus it is no longer questioned or even identified as such. It is simply *assumed*. This should come as no surprise in some sense, considering that numerous faculty are often educated from an MS perspective in state universities where they received their terminal degree, not to mention that many faculty have been trained most of their lives from a MS perspective in the public school system.

The effect of accepting MS and not recognizing it has given rise to the assumption that the Christian worldview and learning are two separate (even disparate) worlds, or "paradigms." In a real sense, much of contemporary education and the Christian worldview *are* two different paradigms, considering that the use of MS is really an assumption that the worldview of secularism is true. What has resulted is what the twentieth century philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, called "incommensurability." To be sure, Kuhn's work dealt specifically with science,[22] but what he says there in this regard can be easily applied to the philosophy of education. For example, just as the Aristotelean paradigm of the world is incommensurable with the Newtonian paradigm (it speaks a different language, uses similar terms with different meanings, and holds to different presuppositions and even challenges old assumptions), so is the present reigning MS paradigm of education with the Christian worldview. They begin with different assumptions and presuppositions

21. This is just how worldviews work as James Sire pointed out in his work. See James Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 18-22 and James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 121-36.

22. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996).

about the nature of the world, humanity, ethics, the meaning of life, and other big questions of life.

The Christian worldview and the secular approach, therefore, are often viewed not to go together, and indeed, we need to recognize that they do not and *cannot* go together. Hence, we have the problem of "integrating faith with learning." This is the root of the problem: *one cannot integrate the Christian worldview with learning when learning is now assumed to be a secular task*.

What does mathematics have to do with Christianity? The answer is difficult when mathematics is viewed to have nothing to do with theology, or religion, that is, when mathematics, by default, is viewed as secular. What does the Christian worldview have to do with crunching numbers and solving equations? What does biology have to do with one's faith? What do physics, medicine, nursing, psychology, or physical education have to do with Christianity? In short, nothing—when MS is the reigning paradigm. MS demands that we look at the world through a non-religious lens. What needs to be admitted, then, is that there is a problem—a *worldview* problem. Many Christian faculty have accepted an incommensurability (MS) into their Christian worldview which demands them to see a rose as *merely* a rose. Only by admitting this problem can steps begin to be made to *re*-integrate faith with learning.

Obstacle Two: Faith is not Knowledge

MS, by definition, is learning with no reference to religion or faith. As such, faith has no place in an educational environment in which MS is employed. Faith is something *other* than knowledge. This is the logical consequence of adopting MS, and it is an inheritance from Enlightenment epistemology. David Dockery makes this observation,

> The rise of the Enlightenment thought was a watershed in the history of Western civilization; it was a time when the Christian consensus was broken by a radical secular spirit. The Enlightenment philosophy stressed the primacy of nature, a high view of reason and a low view of sin, and an antisupernatural bias; and it encouraged revolt against a faith-affirming perspective on education.[23]

That faith is separate from knowledge (and by implication has nothing to do with education) is illustrated well by the late Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould. In his work *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life,* he comments,

> I do not see how science and religion could be unified, or even synthesized, under any common scheme of explanation or analysis, but I also do not understand why the two enterprises should experience any conflict. Science

23. David Dockery, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society Through Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 7-8.

> tries to document the factual character of the natural world. . . . Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, and values. . . . These two magisteria do not overlap.[24]

Although there should be no conflict between the two separate realms according to Gould, negatively, religion and science are two different worlds studying entirely different things. By implication, science is knowledge and faith is not.

A problem with this view, however, is that both science and religion (and Christianity in particular) study, observe, and have something to say about the same subjects. For example, physics and astronomy study origins and the Christian worldview has something to say about this as well. Psychology and sociology attempt to explain the human mind and social relationships, but so does the Christian worldview.

Therefore, contrary to Gould, the two magisterial do in fact overlap. The Christian worldview makes knowledge claims about all of reality, physically *and* metaphysically. The Christian worldview is not merely about "how one feels" but also about "what is actually the case." "Christian integrative thinking," states Duane Litfin, "views all of that created order as Christ's handiwork and thus insists that the reach of such thinking be pervasive and systemic. It will not settle for an unreflective acceptance of any proposed 'facts' without attempting to think Christianly about the system of thought that generated them."[25] The obstacle to viewing faith as not knowledge is a logical consequence of MS that must be overcome if the Christian faith is to be re-integrated with learning.

Obstacle Three: Metaphysical Naturalism

Another fallout of MS and its underlying Enlightenment epistemology is the assumption of the verity of the naturalistic worldview, or metaphysical naturalism. MS does to all of the disciplines of the University what methodological naturalism does to science, namely, assume the philosophy of materialism (or naturalism).

By definition, methodological naturalism, which is employed in science, is the bracketing of supernatural explanations. Only materialistic explanations and conclusions are allowed in science. Such a methodology, however, intrinsically assumes that naturalism is true and theism is false. As the evolutionary biologist Michael Ruse states, "My impression is that generally in important respects [evolutionists] are inclined to agree with their opponents: they do think that naturalism, somehow

24. Stephen Jay Gould quoted in A. Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 151.

25. Gould, quoted in Litfin, 156.

defined, is indeed an important underpinning to their [scientific] positions."[26] Evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin is more direct:

> We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, *because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism* [emphasis added]. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for *we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door*.[27]

MS acts in a similar way. Secularism brackets religious views in education, thus limiting conclusions of inquiry to only secularism. Ultimately, what is "put in" inevitably "comes out." And what cannot "come out" is anything theistic because the inquiry only allowed secularism in the door to begin with, and thus making it impossible to incorporate the Christian worldview. This obstacle, however, is much more serious than methodological naturalism since it is more far-reaching: it is applied across *all* disciplines rather than just science.

Obstacle Four: Moral Relativism

The final obstacle that has resulted from accepting MS in education to be mentioned here is moral relativism. This idea may seem shocking, controversial, or perhaps an overstatement. How can the acceptance of MS lead, or provide aid, to the rise of moral relativism? The answer lies in the fact of the previously mentioned obstacle of faith viewed as antithetical to knowledge. In his work, *Awakening Wonder*, Stephen Turley notes this connection, saying,

> With the advent of the modern age, and more specifically the advancement of modern science, knowledge has become increasingly redefined in such a way so as to exclude any divine moral order. With the breakup of Christendom and the subsequent secularization of the university in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it became increasingly plausible to view knowledge as limited solely to what could be verified by a *method,* namely, the application

26. Michael Ruse, "Methodological Naturalism Under Attack," in *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 364.

27. Cited in Philip E. Johnson, "The Unraveling of Scientific Materialism" *First Things* 17 (1997): 23; emphasis mine.

> of science and mathematics. . . . This new conception of knowledge in effect exposed *all value systems* as mere cultural fabrications.[28]

Turley, in effect, is re-stating Schaeffer's "secular-sacred split" in which "values" and "facts" are entirely separate and have nothing to do with each other. If worldviews and religious beliefs are mere opinion, as discussed earlier, then ethics are as well. As such, the adoption of MS leads, or at least provides aid, to moral relativism.

Why is this important? The reason is that, historically, Christians viewed ethics to be part-and-parcel of education.[29] It was necessary for discipline, honesty, integrity, and discovering truth. If ethics is simply opinion, then conclusions and outcomes of scientific experiments and philosophical inquiry may be distorted or used for one's own purposes or agenda. No longer is there a need, or perhaps even a demand, to practice science or any other discipline by reporting accurate data and not skewing it for one's own advantage. After all, if ethics is just opinion, then one scientist may believe it is permissible to be dishonest for personal gain, like political, social, or academic favors (e.g., tenure), while another may believe contrary to this.

In short, it needs to be understood that the integrity of education and learning depends upon objective morality. Moreover, the very *existence* of education and learning relies upon assuming objective moral values and duties exist, such as honesty and integrity. Without them, the integration of faith and learning is impossible because the Christian worldview provides the moral foundation for learning.

A Rose is *not* just a Rose: Re-integrating Faith with Learning

The four obstacles discussed above provide a beginning point for a discussion on how to re-integrate faith with learning. For these obstacles, four suggestions will be offered in this section on how to overcome them. The first suggestion may seem somewhat discomforting, namely, awaiting the arrival of a new generation to question former secular assumptions in order for a paradigm shift to occur. The second, third, and fourth suggestions turn more directly to how to overcome methodological secularist assumptions that "faith" is different than "knowledge," metaphysical naturalism is true, and morality is relativistic. Ultimately, what needs to be overcome is the overarching idea that a rose is merely a rose. For the re-integration of faith and learning to occur, faculty and students need to understand that a rose is *not* just a rose, contrary to the secularist worldview.

28. Stephen R. Turley, *Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2015), 4-5; emphasis mine.

29. See Kaul, et al., "Predicting Faculty Integration," 173, and the works referred to there: Derek Bok*, Beyond the Ivory tower: Social Responsibilities of the Modern* University (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Larry Lyon, Michael Beaty, and S.L. Mixon, "Making Sense of a 'Religious' University: Faculty Adaptations and Opinions at Brigham Young, Baylor, Notre Dame, and Boston College." *Review of Religious Research* 43 (2002): 326–48.

Anomalies and Paradigm Shift

It was discussed above that one of the obstacles to integrating faith and learning is admitting the problem of MS. Such an admittance, however, is no easy feat. Just as a worldview is part-and-parcel of who one is, so is the method by which one approaches learning. In short, the difficulty of realizing the problem and then taking steps to overcome it may be nearly impossible for the present generation which is entrenched in such a paradigm. What is required, then, is (almost) nothing short of a revolutionary mindset in education that questions previous secular assumptions and methodologies. What is needed is what philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn calls a "paradigm shift."

How does a paradigm shift occur? In Kuhn's work in the philosophy of science, he notes that new scientific theories do not occur until present theories do not adequately predict or explain the present reigning paradigm. There is what Kuhn calls "anomalies," data (if you will) that cannot be explained.[30] In order to explain the phenomena observed, an entirely new approach must be investigated along with questioning old assumptions. Scientists who are willing to do this will challenge the current scientific paradigm, even if this means overthrowing it. But this is the catch: not many are willing to challenge current reigning paradigms and to think outside the box. There is social pressure to support the highly effective paradigm that seems to have stood the test of time. Those unwilling to pursue a different course hold out hope that the old paradigm will eventually account for the anomalies. Those who are revolutionary in thought, however, ultimately end up finding resolutions to the anomalies, usually by adopting an entirely new paradigm or radically modifying the current one.

An example of occurrences of anomalies in the history of science that led to a paradigm shift is Ptolemaic astronomy. This paradigm, although highly successful in predicting star and planetary positions, could not account for all the astronomical observations. There were too many anomalies which it could not account for, which led revolutionary thinkers like Copernicus and Galileo to challenge the reigning paradigm. Because they were willing to do this, the Ptolemaic system was eventually toppled and replaced by Copernicanism (that is, heliocentrism).

What does this have to do with re-integrating faith with learning? Precisely this: in order to overcome the reigning secular paradigmatic approach to education, there will be a need for some faculty to recognize that MS creates anomalies in the pursuit of knowledge that cannot be solved, and then they must be willing to pursue resolutions using a different approach.[31] Unfortunately, such a recognition

30. Kuhn, *Structure*, 97.

31. As an example, the existence of consciousness has perplexed neuroscientists and naturalists for decades. Perhaps the key to unlocking this mysterious anthropological phenomenon and resolving this anomaly will be the jettisoning of MS. For a good discussion from a naturalist perspective, see Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is*

and pursuit will be just as difficult as it is in the discipline of science. It will take a new generation of faculty, perhaps quite a bit younger, who are not as committed to MS. It will take educators who are willing to be trailblazers and revolutionaries, much like (but possibly not to the exact same level) as Copernicus, Newton, and Einstein. Thus, to ultimately overcome secular methodology and integrate a more Christian approach to learning, patience for the rise of a new generation of faculty may be partially the answer. It just may take a new generation of Christians not as committed to and not as embedded in secular methodology to be able to see a rose not as merely a rose but as a creation of the divine with objective beauty, living according to a designed purpose.

Faith as Knowledge

Earlier it was noted that the bifurcation of faith and knowledge is one major obstacle to integrating faith and learning. Another way forward to reintegrating faith with learning is, therefore, to rediscover that faith is a kind of knowledge. Faith is not a privately held system of beliefs and opinions based solely upon personal experience that stands totally apart from knowledge.

This rediscovery begins with understanding the concepts of faith and knowledge. Faith is belief that something is true and trusting and committing one's self to such truth. Knowledge, on the other hand, is justified true belief (in keeping with the long held philosophical definition). As we can see, faith and knowledge have a point of contact: believing what is true. A legitimate strong faith is one that believes (and commits to) what is *true*; to have knowledge is to believe that which is *true*. Faith and knowledge, therefore, have as their object that which is *true*. As such, faith is a kind of knowledge. It is not totally "other" than knowledge.

This idea of faith has implications for the concept of "truth." It means that faith is about believing what is objectively true, not subjectively true. Thus, statements of faith (just like knowledge) are statements meant to convey how the world really is, not just merely how an individual perceives the world. Faith, then, is just as much about truth as claims to knowledge. This is illustrated well by the long-held position by Christian philosophers and theologians that "all truth is God's truth." Or, to put it another popular way, there are two books of truth: nature and Scripture.

It is true, as Litfin comments, that the idea that "all truth is God's truth" seems to have lost its punch because of its pervasiveness among theologians. He does, however, lay out some helpful ideas of what this aphorism is meant to convey: (1) God exists; (2) through the agency of the Son, God created the universe; (3) we can therefore entertain an intellectual construct called "reality"; (4) reality is multidimensional and complex; (5) reality is also coherent and unified, centered upon Christ; (6) God has created humans with the capacity to apprehend, however fallibly

almost Certainly False (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35-69.

and incompletely, this reality; (7) genuine knowledge is feasible for humans; (8) human knowledge stems from special revelation and discovery; (9) we can, therefore, maintain a distinction between truth and error; and (10) all that is truthful, from whatever source, is unified, and will cohere with whatever else is truthful.[32] Litfin summarizes this approach this way:

> Precisely because the Christian thinker works from a Christocentric reference point, and nothing can be irrelevant to the person of Christ, by the same token Jesus Christ cannot be irrelevant to anything we study. Nothing evades his touch, and so nothing should escape ours. Not even the natural sciences.[33]

The Assumption of Theism

The third obstacle discussed above was the assumption of metaphysical naturalism, which rides on the coattails of MS. Thus, in order to re-integrate faith with learning, theism and all that it entails must become the presupposition of the Christian scholar and teacher. Re-establishing theism as an assumption, however, is not easy in a culture which faculty find themselves trained in MS. Hopefully, the following discussion will help faculty be more successful.

First, although it could be left unstated, faculty must be committed Christians. Additionally, Christian faculty need to practice continually spiritual disciplines so that their approach to education is, by second nature, Christian.

A study which examined how faculty successfully integrate faith with learning at an evangelical Christian liberal arts university found that Christian faculty who are growing in their faith do not really "integrate" faith with learning. Rather, their faith is a part of who they are, and it overflows into their teaching. In other words, it is an *ontological idea*. The study comments:

> The emergence of ontological foundation as an IFL construct has implications for professors wanting to integrate effectively with students. *Integration does not start with scholarly acumen; rather, it starts with each faculty member's personal spiritual depth as expressed in their ontological foundation*.[34]

In other words, those who were viewed to have integrated faith with learning successfully, did so because they were Christians who already implemented their faith into every aspect of their lives, so much so, that it simply came naturally.[35]

32. Litfin, *Conceiving*, 87-94.

33. Ibid., 158.

34. Sites, et al., "A Phenomenology," 37; emphasis mine.

35. Kaul's study indicates also that faith integration occurs mostly in institutions where faculty are "full-time" employed, earned a "degree from an institution that shares [their] denominational affiliation," and work at an institution that shares their denominational convictions. Kaul, et al., "Predicting Faith Integration," 172ff.

This study certainly calls into question the validity of the entire enterprise of "integrating faith with learning," as even the authors note. But it must be kept in mind that the present educational milieu is secular, and so there will be times (perhaps numerous) when Christian faculty will have to be more intentional and consciously aware of their commitments. As the authors conclude, "Occasions do arise when one must intentionally think about who they are as followers of Christ and what that will mean in a given context."[36] The reason why, again, is because MS has become a part of many Christian faculty's worldview. As such, a presumption of theism will need to be more focused and intentional.

Faculty must assume more than just the verity of Christian theism in general. The above study assumes that those faculty who successfully integrated faith with learning understand *all* that the Christian worldview entails. This would include the nature of God as creator, ruler, and redeemer, divine providence, the nature of man, ethics, sin, and much more. To ensure that faculty across all disciplines have a basic Christian worldview foundation may entail faculty theological training, especially for those outside the theological disciplines. This also has strong implications for those Christian universities which attempt to integrate faith with learning while at the same time employing non-Christian faculty: it simply cannot be done. Christian universities need to consider hiring not only Christians exclusively, but those who also hold a seminary degree in addition to their degree in the hard sciences and so forth.

One particular Christian worldview belief which has special significance that faculty would require training in is meaning, whether of life in general or humanity in particular. C. S. Lewis pointed out years ago that if education is approached from a materialist perspective (in our case, from a MS approach), meaning is entirely lost. The reason why is because materialists only "see all the facts but not the meaning. . . There *is* nothing else there." As a result, continues Lewis, the materialist is "in the position of an animal. You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing.* You point to a bit of food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning."[37] The materialist, or methodological secularist, is able to see only hard facts. To understand the purpose, design, or meaning of anything, the Christian worldview must be consulted. MS simply cannot do this. It sees only a rose, not the purpose, design, and meaning of the rose. This is another reason why it may become necessary for all faculty to hold a theological degree.

Objective Moral Realism

A pervasive thought today is that morality has nothing to do with education. More often than not, morality is viewed as culturally relative or personally subjective. As

36. Sites, et al., "Phenomenology," 37.

37. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 113-14.

such, it is often viewed as having no place in education, especially since morality is intimately related to religious beliefs. Thus, just like religious beliefs, morality is argued to be antithetical to education. The Christian worldview, however, views morality as real and objective—there really are right and wrong objective values and duties that ought to be followed by everyone. As such, if faith is to be re-integrated with learning, it is imperative to make ethics foundational to and interwoven into education like thread in a quilt.

A legitimate Christian education is impossible apart from ethics. Without the values of discipline, integrity, honesty, among other things, education becomes dangerous—it is a ship without a rudder. Dabney explains,

> With regard to right human action, the will and the conscience must be purified and enlightened. To enhance the vigor of the soul's other actions by training is nothing but superfluous mischief. If in a ship the compass is broken and the pilot is blind, it is better that there should not be a great force to move her machinery. The more energetic its motion, the greater is the likelihood the ship will speedily be upon the breakers. Surely this is sufficient to who the reflecting mind that right moral instruction cannot be separated at any point, or for any time, from intellectual training, without great mischief being done.[38]

Education without objective morality, in effect, becomes tyrannical or enslavement. It imparts knowledge to the student but does not instruct him or her how to use it for its proper ends, which is ultimately for the love of God and others. Without such moral instruction, knowledge can become a tool to demand obedience (enslave) or rule with an iron fist (tyranny). As Lewis once stated, "A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery."[39]

Additionally, integrating ethics into education is about the development of the *soul*. Certainly, education ought to be about developing the mind, but Christians have recognized historically the need to develop the whole person, not just the intellect. MS disallows such a development since it denies (or at best ignores) the existence of the soul. But the soul is in desperate need of being molded and shaped to have the virtues required to live the good life as well as to be more like Christ. The reason for this is because humanity is inherently sinful since the fall of Adam and Eve. Humanity's most pressing need is moral redemption. As such, moral instruction is absolutely necessary, not just to study and research rightly, but to shape and mold students' souls. This has even been noted by the atheist Allain de Botton,

> Christianity is focused on helping a part of us that secular language struggles even to name . . . and to which we may as well refer, following Christian

38. Robert L. Dabney, *On Secular Education*, ed. Douglas Wilson (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996), 19.

39. C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 73.

> terminology, as the *soul*. It has been the essential task of the Christian pedagogic machine to nurture, reassure, comfort and guide our souls. . . . A good soul was one that had managed to find appropriate answers to the great questions of existence, a soul marked by such godly virtues as faith, hope, charity and love.[40]

What courses have integrated the development of the soul in the Christian University? For sure, a course on ethics may accomplish this, but what about, say, psychology, sociology, or engineering? Is there any inclination to incorporate such throughout every degree program and course in the University? More than likely there is not, and it is the contention of this paper that this is primarily due to the acceptance of MS, which makes moral values and duties subjective and the soul non-existent (or, at least, irrelevant). What hath ethics and values to do with subjects outside ethics proper? Such a question reveals the difficult task of re-integrating faith with learning that still lies ahead. Unfortunately, too many still view humanity as merely material—a rose as just a rose.

Conclusion

A brief survey of the history of education shows that Christians once engaged learning from a uniquely Christian perspective, or worldview. It was not until primarily the rise of Enlightenment epistemology and modern science that the Christian approach to education began to erode and eventually a secular approach to take over. This methodological secularist approach to learning and its epistemological assumptions brought with them several obstacles that must be overcome. First, it separated faith from the idea of knowledge. Second, it assumed the worldview of naturalism. Third, it presumed the verity of moral relativism. In order to overcome this secular methodological approach to education and re-integrate the Christian worldview successfully, faith must once again be understood as knowledge, theism must be assumed, and moral objective realism must be re-incorporated in all studies. In short, all studies must be Christ-centered: "an education that rigorously and without apology insists upon looking through and beyond the created order to see the Christ-centeredness of all things."[41] This will not and cannot be accomplished until a rose is viewed once again as more than just a rose.

40. Allain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 113, 115.

41. Litfin, *Conceiving,* 67.

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Book Reviews

Schrock, David S. *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God*. Short Studies in Biblical Theology. Edited by Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022, pp. 199, $14.99, paperback.

David Schrock is the Pastor of Preaching and Theology at Occoquan Bible Church in Woodbridge, Virginia. Dr. Schrock earned both his MDiv and PhD in systematic theology from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His dissertation is titled, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement." He is an Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology at Indianapolis Theological Seminary, Boyce College, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and, formerly, Crossroads Bible College. Dr. Schrock is also an Associate Fellow for the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God by David S. Schrock is a modest monograph about how the glory of God is fully revealed in the royal priesthood of Christ. This abbreviated work of biblical theology focuses on the biblical theme of priesthood to demonstrate how God's glory is revealed in Christ's righteousness expressed through the biblical concept of the priesthood. In an introduction, six chapters, and an epilogue, Schrock works through all of Scripture by sections to illustrate how the concept of royal priests is both central to understanding the metanarrative of Scripture and finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Like a classical work of biblical theology, Schrock works from the beginning of Scripture to the end, focusing on the development of the concept of biblical priesthood as Scripture unfolds.

In his introduction Schrock writes that the glory of God in the Exodus cannot be fully realized apart from the revelation of Christ in the New Testament (p. 15). Schrock states, "through the various phases of Christ's priesthood, the glory of God is fully revealed" (p. 16). God's glory, Schrock contends, is revealed through Christ's "ministry of righteousness" whereby Christ grants righteousness to His people through "covenantal obedience, sacrificial death, victorious relationship, and heavenly intercession" (p. 16). Schrock claims that priesthood is central to redemptive history and the concept of glory, and this becomes Schrock's core contention throughout the book (pp. 16-17). Schrock states, "The aim of this book is to study the priesthood so that we might delight more fully in the glory of God's Son, our great high priest. Moreover, by learning the history and purpose of priesthood in the Bible, we will better understand God's work in redemption" (p. 17). Schrock concludes the introduction by claiming, "In all, this book will chronicle the hard-but-ultimately-happy history of God's royal priesthood. At the end of our journey, we will find a vision of royal

priests worshiping God and serving alongside Jesus Christ" (p. 25).

One important and interesting point of focus for Schrock's biblical theology of priesthood is the contention that God created mankind to be His priests in creation. Schrock claims that Adam and Eve were created to serve as God's first royal priests to creation (p. 27). Schrock argues that the Garden of Eden was intended to be the sanctuary where Adam was placed to serve as a form of priest responsible for tending to God's requirements, like the Levitical priests would do with the tabernacle or the temple later in Israel's history (pp. 28-29). Schrock also claims that the Garden of Eden is reflected in the pattern of the tabernacle or temple with the outside world serving as the courtyard, the Garden serving as the Holy Place, and the top of God's Mountain as the Most Holy Place (p. 29). Thus, Schrock suggests the purpose of mankind, created in the image of God according to Genesis 1:26-27, is to "mediate God's presence" to all of creation as royal priests.

Schrock contends that Adam, the Patriarchs, and Moses all served the function of priests despite lacking the formal title. Schrock acknowledges that neither Adam, the Patriarchs, nor Moses were referred to as priests while they each lived, yet he argues they are all described in priestly terms, given priestly duties, and some were even referred to as priests later in Scripture (pp. 44-45, 53-54). Ultimately, according to Schrock, all these figures prefigure the supremacy of Christ as High Priest who reveals God's glory completely (pp. 16, 23).

While not the focal point of the book, Schrock places an important emphasis on the role of the sacrificial system within the greater cultic system of worship in the Old Testament. Schrock notes how the cultic practice of sacrifice was introduced into the system of worship carried out by priests resulting from mankind's fall into sin chronicled in Genesis 3 (p. 28). Schrock argues about the centrality of the sacrificial system to the duty of priests, saying, "every form of worship in the Old Testament centers on the priests and their sacrificial duties" (p. 68). In Chapter 5, Schrock notes how the sacrifice of Christ Jesus is the focal point of the Gospels and illustrate Jesus performing both the role of the high priest who makes the sacrifice on behalf of the people as well as the sacrificial lamb who dies for the sins of the people (p. 134-140). Through Christ's dual role as the high priest and the lamb of God, Jesus fulfills the necessity of the sacrificial system and enables His followers to serve God once again as royal priests bearing His image to the world and reflecting His glory to creation (pp. 157-159).

While there are already some very good and helpful resources in the field of biblical studies (and, more specifically, the field of biblical theology) pertaining to the concept of the biblical priesthood, Schrock's *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God* is an immensely helpful entry point for both "newbies" to the Bible and seasoned students of Scripture alike. Biblical-theological students will be challenged to examine the concept of biblical priesthood in a new light that will encourage their understanding of priests, the Law, the Levitical system, and the role Christ

serves as the true High Priest. This is not a technical work on the biblical priesthood, though it is more thorough than a survey of what the Bible has to say on the subject. Further, this is not an in-depth treatment of biblical theology, though it is a sufficient one (the series this book belongs to is, after all, titled "Short Studies in Biblical Theology"). This book is a fresh take on a complicated and ancient system of worship that helps that complicated and ancient system make sense and, most importantly, unveils Scripture's teaching on it in a way that both reveals Christ's prominence in the system and how God is glorified through it all.

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Kim, Brittany, and Charlie Trimm. *Understanding Old Testament Theology*: *Mapping the Terrain of Recent Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020, 177 pp., $14.99, paperback.

In *Understanding Old Testament Theology*, Brittany Kim and Charlie Trimm provide an up-to-date survey of approaches to Old Testament theology. Their volume self-consciously flows in a similar vein as Klink and Lockett's *Understanding Biblical Theology*, but the latter focuses primarily on New Testament issues and scholars (p. 2). Kim serves as a professor at North Park Theological Seminary and Northeastern Seminary, and Trimm as a professor at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. Both are products of the Ph.D. program at Wheaton College.

After an introduction that includes a brief history of the field (pp. 4-7), Kim and Trimm propose their cartographical metaphor of Old Testament theology as a diverse mountain range. As a mountain range has different peaks, each of which offers a unique vantage point by which someone may view the landscape, so Old Testament theology has different peaks. Among the peaks, some are closer and more alike than others.

Following the mountain range metaphor, the book is divided into three main parts. Part one, History, includes Old Testament theologies grounded in "biblical (hi) story" (p. 13) and historical-critical Old Testament theology. The approach of biblical (hi)story (e.g., Alexander, Goldingay, Gentry and Wellum) sees the Old Testament as a continuous story, generally takes the historicity of the events at face value, and often sees Old Testament theology as prescriptive. Conversely, the historical-critical approach (e.g., von Rad, Barr) often uses scholarly reconstructions to craft a chronology of composition and in some cases could be categorized as the study of the history of Israelite religion rather than any kind of prescriptive theology (pp. 39-44).

Part two, Theme, consists of "multiplex" (p. 55) thematic approaches and central thematic approaches. Practitioners within the multi-plex approach (e.g., Routledge, Walton) highlight numerous themes and do not limit the Old Testament to a central

organizing idea. Conversely, interpreters within the central thematic approach (e.g., Dempster, Hamilton, Kaiser, Kaiser Jr., Wright) seek to find a single thematic thread that ties the Old Testament together. Scholars searching for a single theme often come to very different conclusions about what comprises the center of the Old Testament (pp. 78-83).

Part three, Context, is the most varied of the three parts and surveys Old Testament canonical theology, Jewish biblical theology, and postmodern Old Testament theology. Canonical theology (e.g., Childs, House, Sailhamer) focuses on reading the text as Christian scripture, and studies the text in its final form. Jewish biblical theology (e.g., Gesundheit, Goshen-Gottstein) highlights diversity within the Old Testament and examines topics that Jewish writers feel most pertinent (e.g., law and land, pp. 115-19). Finally, the section on postmodern Old Testament theology surveys a wide panoply of interpreters (e.g., Brueggemann, Trible) with a divergence of methods and conclusions. The book ends with a summative chapter that includes a word about the future of Old Testament theology and an invitation for students to climb the mountain, as it were, and continue their studies.

One clear strength of the book is its organization. Each chapter follows a similar format, beginning with a clear definition and summary of the approach in view. Each chapter also includes a bibliographic chart that informs the reader of the works to be examined, as well as an examination of points of tension within each approach. An appendix (pp. 161-62) provides a convenient and comprehensive chart of each approach for quick reference. Readers will welcome and benefit from the clarity of the authors' presentation.

In addition to the survey of various approaches, the authors examine how each method engages with the book of Exodus, particularly the giving of the Law on Sinai. This practical exercise helps to put meat on the bones, so to speak, of the methodologies, and shows how they differ in interpretive conclusions.

While Kim and Trimm's categories are sound, some works they examine could easily fit into multiple camps, as the authors recognize (p. 9). For instance, Jackson Wu's essay "Biblical Theology from a Chinese Perspective: Interpreting Scripture through the Lens of Honor and Shame" is placed within the postmodern Old Testament theology. As Kim and Trimm note, Wu does not deny the importance of authorial intent, the possibility of objective meaning, or biblical authority (pp. 138-39). In that sense, his work does not fit perfectly into the postmodern category. Quibbles about how well works might fight within each category speak to the inherent difficulty in the task of organizing ideas.

Kim and Trimm at times offer incisive but gentle critique. For instance, they shrewdly ask why proponents of canonical Old Testament theology often do not place a greater emphasis on the canonical order of books (p. 103). Kim and Trimm write with the kind of charitable spirit that earns the right to be heard in evaluation. Should Kim and Trimm publish a second edition, readers would benefit from a more direct

evaluation of the pros and cons of the various methods, especially in the sections where the authors examine Exodus as a test case.

One observation that could perhaps be seen as a weakness is the lack of discussion on recent advances in narrative/literary criticism in Old Testament studies (e.g., Altar, Sternberg). While narrative criticism may be distinct from Old Testament theology proper, it dovetails with the approaches enough to merit attention. As an example, narrative criticism helps demonstrate the cohesiveness of the biblical narrative in a way that arguably supports the conclusions of the biblical (hi)story camp and adherents to canonical criticism. While it might be difficult to place the contributions of narrative criticism within a single category, the target audience of the book (e.g., students being introduced to Old Testament theology) would benefit from being alerted to the influence of narrative criticism and its importance in modern Old Testament studies.

Overall, Kim and Trimm have provided a valuable resource that is ideal for students first engaging with the field of Old Testament theology. Professors or teachers looking to provide students with a clear, accessible introduction to the field would be hard-pressed to find a better option.

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Ross, William A. and W. Edward Glenny eds. *The T&T Handbook of Septuagint Research*. Great Britain, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, pp. xxv+486, $175, hardback.

William A. Ross is Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC (Back Cover). A sample of Ross' publications includes *The Septuagint: What it is and Why it Matters* (2021) and *A Book-by-Book Guide to Septuagint Vocabulary* (2019). Moreover, he writes a blog titled Septuaginta &C. W. Edward Glenny is Professor of New Testament and Greek at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul in Minnesota (Back Cover). Glenny is also an accomplished writer with titles that include commentaries on Micah, Amos, and Hosea for the *Septuagint Commentary Series*.

A glance in the preface shows this handbook is constructed to complement James K. Aitken's *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* (xii). For those unfamiliar with Aitken's book, his volume "provides a book-by-book overview of the corpus [i.e., the Septuagint]" (xii). Within the handbook, the contributors include many notable scholars. Among the several scholars worthy of mention are James K. Atkin, Peter J. Gentry, Steve Moyise, and Stanley E. Porter. The editor states the goal of the volume is to deliver a consolidated resource that presents "the wide variety of scholarly approaches to research" for both the "specialists and non-specialists" (xii).

The handbook is divided into six parts: (1) Origins, (2) Language, (3) Text, (4) Reception, (5) Theology, Translation, and Commentary, and (6) Survey of Literature. Most chapters follow a four-section structure: "first, introducing the research topic; second, presenting an overview of views and/or debates related to it; third, discussing the relevant research methods, theories, or tools; and fourth, highlighting ongoing research questions" (4). Also, each chapter has a short, annotated bibliography to provide further information for research (4).

Reviews of handbooks risk turning into reproductions of the table of contents (a resource readily available on the publisher's website, www.bloomsbury.com). To avoid such a travesty, this review will highlight three chapters, which showcase the accessibility of the material on the LXX for new students, the advanced material for seasoned students of the LXX, and the quality of scholarship within the handbook.

Ross Williams's introductory chapter highlights how accessible the Septuagint can be to new students of the LXX. First, his introduction contains a sweeping overview of major Septuagint studies dating to the 1600s (1). Second, the recounting of history slows down in the twentieth century. With the twentieth century in focus, Williams brings the reader, and new students, to the current discussions in the handbook. Williams states that the handbook's purpose is "to help mitigate the proliferation of scholarship by providing an up-to-date overview of the discipline in a single volume" (3). Third, Williams explains the approaches to the meaning of the title "Septuagint" and the abbreviation "LXX," which familiarizes readers with the complexity, nuance, and difficulties in applying the word and abbreviation to the corpus and serves as a guide for reading a variety of definitions for the Septuagint found in the handbook (4-5). In addition to the introductory material, the chapter shares the design and goals of the volume. This includes the secondary goal of highlighting significant research topics within Septuagint studies (4).

Mikhail Seleznev's chapter, "The Septuagint in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition," is highlighted because it demonstrates the advanced material in the handbook (Ch. 19). The Eastern Orthodox tradition receives an entire chapter, which is not common in introductory textbooks. Seleznev provides an overview of the OT Canon of the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Eastern Orthodox churches' use of the Septuagint, modern-Greek and modern-Russian translations of the OT, and current debates within the Orthodox Church concerning the Septuagint and Hebrew OT. Last, the chapter discusses the uniqueness of the Septuagint in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Unlike Protestant or perhaps other Western Churches, "the Septuagint tradition in the Orthodox world, they are not just objects of historical study, but they have direct bearing on the matter of Orthodox identity" (297).

Stanley Porter's chapter on "A Greek-Text-Oriented Approach" to study the Septuagint was a high point of the book. His goal is to defend the Brill Septuagint Commentary Series hermeneutical method (363). Porter makes a solid defense that is both elementary (e.g., "The Septuagint is a Greek text, and therefore merits comment

on it as a Greek text" (366)) and technical (Porter's argument for a Greek-text-oriented commentary has four reasons and six sub-dimensions (366-369)). The reader learns about the implications of such an approach, and the effect is far more helpful than using the LXX as an interlinear tool for understanding the Hebrew text. Also, Porter suggests that the "Greek text should be considered canonical" (372). For support of a canonical understanding of the Greek text, he discusses the canonical status when the Greek Pentateuch was first translated (372), the prevalent use of the Greek text by the NT authors, and "the eastern or Orthodox church or churches" practices or traditions (373). Readers will find Porter's arguments thorough and worth engaging.

The *T&T Clark Handbook of the Septuagint* is an excellent tool for learning about the Septuagint, a mighty instrument for availing oneself of additional resources in Septuagint studies, and a conversation starter to prompt further research. The three benefits will briefly be discussed throughout the recommendation.

The handbook is recommended for advanced seminary students, scholars, and libraries. This book is likely too advanced for students entering seminary. The handbook requires previous knowledge of textual criticism and of Jewish and Christian traditions (particularly regarding textual transmission and understanding of texts). However, the resource may serve well at the graduate level, assuming the student has taken prerequisite courses like Biblical Hermeneutics. Further, this resource could be supplemented with entry-level textbooks or handouts. Established scholars—those already introduced to the Septuagint and biblical hermeneutics—will find the book approachable. It is unnecessary, but it would behoove the reader to know some Greek and Hebrew. Last, this resource should be available in libraries, perhaps even church libraries (i.e., where the church provides theological training). The handbook would serve well as the only book on the Septuagint in such a library.

The handbook serves as a wonderful entry-level tool for learning/teaching the Septuagint. Several, if not all, the chapters of the book overlap with content found in introductions to the Septuagint, such as chapters on the origin, transmission, and language of the Septuagint. However, unlike introductions to the Septuagint, the handbook contains advanced material and is focused on presenting "major research topics in the discipline" (4). The change in focus from an introduction to discussing major research topics best suits scholars. Besides the handbooks highlighting research topics and recommended resources, the handbook spends more time and gives more attention to issues of the Septuagint (e.g., Chapter 19 by Seleznev, mentioned above). This content is more advanced and is well suited for post-graduate or as selected material for graduate students.

Last, libraries should make this book available to their patrons. Indeed, theological colleges would be interested in this volume, so the main recommendation is directed toward smaller libraries and churches that serve semi-formal or lay-theological training. With this single resource, a patron has access to an advanced

volume on the Septuagint that contains accessible portions for the novice and excels at serving the more knowledgeable reader.

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Fyall, Robert, S. *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002. $24.00, pp. 208.

A continuation of 1991 dissertation, Robert Fyall, revisits Job creation theology. Dr. Fyall is a Senior Tutor in Ministry for the Cornhill Training Course, Scotland. He has taught Old Testament at St. John's College in Durham, England. In the present work, the author focuses on creation and evil that revolves around Behemoth and Leviathan. Fyall examines these figures in light of the ANE materials. He argues that Behemoth represents death and Leviathan Satan. He solves the tension scholars perceive with the disappearance of Satan after the initial chapters.

Now my Eyes have Seen You introduces readers to Job with a succinct introduction. Readers unfamiliar with Job will benefit from the thorough but brief history of research. The author describes his aim as a holistic depiction of creation and evil within Job (17). Fyall interprets the book of Job as a literary unit which differs from critical scholars. Thus, he rejects deconstructive interpretations and opts for a canonical interpretation. The book interacts with Job's adoption of myth through the imaginative canonical process of inspiration (27-28).

In chapter two, Fyall surveys the legal material which gives coherence to the book. He focuses on Job 19:21–27. Chapter three and four examine the *Images of Creation and Evil in the book of Job* to discuss the implications of Behemoth and Leviathan in chapters five through eight. Thus, in chapter five and six, Fyall focuses on Behemoth to explain how the reader should anticipate Behemoth from Job 3. Chapters seven and eight discuss Leviathan within the scope of Job and ANE material. He concludes with the unity of Job from Job 42.

Fyall describes the tensions of creation and evil within the book of Job while defending the integrity of the text and author. First, he balances Job's use of myth and theology in the book of Job. The author argues that the Job interacts with the surrounding culture to show Yahweh triumphing over the gods of the nations. Lastly, he demonstrates a cohesion narrative from the images of creation which establishes a picture of evil in the world.

At the end of the first chapter, Fyall introduces the topic of myth and theology with three observations. He observes first that the author uses creative motifs to present a distinct message (28). He argues that if Job used common mythology then it would be hard to maintain to the doctrine of revelation. Fyall doesn't deny a common cognitive framework but comes close. Recent works such as John Walton's *The Lost*

World of Genesis One argue for a common cognitive worldview. Fyall does not fully develop this point but simply states that the author must understand his genre and message. He assumes authorial conscience in drafting parallel literature so much that he neglects to develop this observation. He does provide a brief overview of Job and Canaanite myths in his appendix. Fyall covers a large amount of material with brevity and clarity in the first chapter. Cecil Grant finds him unable to balance the materials,[1] but she overstates the case. The first chapter establishes a solid foundation to cover technical details later in the book.

Second, the author argues that Job interacts with the surrounding worldviews to demonstrate the incomparability of Yawheh (28). Fyall develops this observation throughout the book and Daniel P. Bricker comments that he goes to great lengths to prove the intertextual links.[2] Although, Fyall provides substantial textual links; he fails to provide an iron tight case. He builds upon his presuppositions that Yahweh is the one true God in the author's mind. Fyall does not engage the history religions school but presupposes the image of creation demonstrates that the author interacts with the surrounding worldview. Evangelicals will agree to his presuppositions, but critical scholars will baulk at them. His argument that author gleans from the surrounding literature does not prove that Job argues that Yahweh triumphs over their gods. Critical scholars could argue that the Job saw the gods of the nations as a reliable source of inspiration. Nevertheless, he presents valid conclusions that Job subjects the gods of the nations to weakness while the Yahweh remains sovereign.

Third, the allusions to Canaanite myths provide strong evidence for interpreting Behemoth and Leviathan supernaturally. The absence of Satan from the majority of the text of Job perpexles interpreters. Robert B. Chisholm compliments Fyall's answer to the absence of Satan and the possible solution.[3] Fyall aids interpreters to the issue of creation and evil in Job where Job finds himself in a fallen world that turns on him. He answers the question with showing that Satan and death are working in the world, but God sovereign rules over the world.

Now My Eyes have Seen You provides an analysis of creation and evil in the book of Job. Evangelical readers will benefit from Fyall's synthesis of ANE literature with the biblical text. Readers will be able to engage the sources and begin to think holistically about the book. In an era of critical scholarship, Fyall provides a breath of fresh air to the pastor and theologian. His analysis transcends sections of the text by incorporating the final form. He uses the theology of the final form to

1. Cecil Grant, "A Review: Now my eyes have seen you: images of creation and evil in the book of Job," *Them* 28, no. 3 (2003): 56.

2. Daniel P. Bricker, "A Review: Now my eyes have seen you: images of creation and evil in the book of Job," *JETS* 46, no. 2 (2003): 328.

3. Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "A Review: Now my eyes have seen you: images of creation and evil in the book of Job," *Bsac* 162, no. *648* (2005): 499.

demonstrate continuity of the text. Fyall encourages a spiritual reading of the text by incorporating Behemoth and Leviathan throughout the book.

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Kipfer, Sara and Jeremy M. Hutton, eds. *The Book of Samuel and Its Response to Monarchy.* Stuttgard, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2021, pp. 344, hardcover, $102.00.

The Book of Samuel and Its Response to Monarchy is a collection of essays presented at Samuel Seminar in 2019 in Aberdeen, which coincided with Dr. Walter Dietrich's 75th birthday. The book's essays focus on the power of the in two ways. (1) *The Book of Samuel as a Text Collection about Different Stages of the Institutionalization of Power.* (2) *The Book of Samuel as a Medium of Power Communication and a Contribution to the Political Discourse through the Centuries.* The book divides into three main sections. Sara Kipfer and Jeremy M. Hutton introduce the reader to key topics (11–22). The main body of the book contains the essays from twelve contributors. The book concludes with a review of the material and critique by Dietrich.

David Firth, in the first essay, argues that Hannah's prayer (1 Sam 2:1–10) is crucial for a final for reading of the text. Hannah's prayer establishes key themes and points of references which are taken up and developed later in the book (23). The book primarily focuses on the reversal of fortunes motif and critiques those who do not align with Yahweh. Her song functions as a hope within the narrative since there is no king in Israel at this point, but also it critiques the traditional views of kingship. The next essay Regine Hunziker-Rodewald raises the issue of identifying pattern relationships among the semantic-syntactic data in 1 Samuel 5–6 in relation to the images offered by Philistia to the ark (39). He argues that the data shows the images belong to the setting of an ordeal performed to decide the ark's guilt or innocence in what happened in 1 Samuel 6:9. In addition, he argues that the parallel in 1 Samuel 5–6 shows the foreigners winner's perspective and the native loser's perspective is unique in ancient Near Eastern texts.

In the third essay, Ian D. Wilson examines the book of Samuel as a source for the cultural history of ancient Judah (63). He focuses on how the book of Samuel presents the monarchy and how 2nd temple readers would interpret it. Next, Hulisani Ramantswana utilizes two cultural sayings from the Vhavenda people to interrogate the biblical text (81). Thus, this study engages in a culturally enthused hermeneutic of suspicion. The fifth essay Jeremy M. Hutton argues that an earlier pre-Deuteronomistic narrative underlies Wellhausen's so called antimonarchic story (115).

The sixth essay, Hannes Bezzel questions the common interpretation of 2 Samuel 2–4 in terms of centralized monarchic states (165). He questions that these texts are anachronistic particularly from the point of view of recent approaches clan- and

patronage-client relations. He argues that 2 Sam 2:1–2aa.3a^{LXX}.4a as the oldest version of David's coronation. The next essay, Sara Kipfer reevaluates the parallels between 1 Samuel 14:47–48, 52 and 2 Samuel 8:11–12, 15 (183). She revaluates these complicated literary problems by considering the ancient Near Eastern context. The eighth essay, Mahri Leonard-Fleckman argues that the exchange between David and Gath in 2 Samuel 15:19–22 could date as late as the post-exilic period.

The ninth essay, Benjamin J. M. Johnson argues that the final shape of the book of Samuel is not purely critical or defensive of David (225). The following essay, Thomas Naumann focuses on the question of establishing or realign royal power (243). His essay focuses primarily upon the weeping of the king as a means to establish power and he reviews previous suggestions concerning the weeping of the king. The next essay, Ilse Mullner examines the Davidic family with its conflicts, its power plays, and its struggles (281). The ambivalence of the main characters and the monarchy are best understood by focusing on the dynastic aspects of the monarchy. The twelfth essay, Johannes Klein argues that on a synchronic level 1 Samuel–1 Kings 12 gives an anti-dynastic tendency (299). However, the author of the Saul-David narratives have taken their material and shaped it so that it is positive.

The book presents some of the world's leading scholars on the book of Samuel in a singular monograph. The book illuminates various topics in the book of Samuel from diachronic readings to cultural readings. The book's focus upon the power of the monarchy highlights a key issue within the book of Samuel and the editors have chosen an appropriate theme. The book serves as a great reference for scholars researching the book of Samuel. The most significant essay was David Firth's, "Hannah's Prayer as a Hope for and Critique of Monarchy." His essay brings to light the hermeneutical underpinnings of the book as a whole and shows that there is a macro-structure. Firth shows how Hannah's song connects to the larger narrative. However, he does fail to connect 1 Samuel 2:10 and 2:35, which describes Yahweh's anointed (king-priest) rising up after the fall of the Elide dynasty.

A downfall of the present volume is the lack of discussion of the king's relationship to the priesthood. The priesthood is a major institution in the monarchy and the king's relationship to it can be seen in the book of Samuel. For example, a key power struggle that 1 Samuel 2:35 anticipates is the removal of the Elide dynasty and the rise of a faithful priest, which this author believes is a king-priest (1 Sam 2:10, 35). Although various authors within this book consider ancient Near Eastern materials, they do consider that the surrounding kings of the nations were king-priests. Thus, the king's role being similar to the kings of the nations (Deut 17:14; 1 Sam 8:5). As a result, the book focuses only on the power of the king within certain institutions and does not fully explore the role of the king's role with the priesthood. Despite this oversight, this book is an engaging read and worth digging into for further study

into the book of Samuel. The book is an ideal read for a Ph.D. student or professor engaging on the topic of Samuel.

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Schnittjer, Gary Edward. *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021, 1098 pages, $58.00, hardcover.

Gary Edward Schnittjer is the Distinguished Professor of Old Testament for Cairn University's School of Divinity. Schnittjer received his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary and has completed post-graduate studies in both Hebrew and Aramaic from the University of Pennsylvania and Westminster Theological Seminary, respectively. He has published numerous articles in various aspects of Old Testament Biblical studies as well as another monograph, *The Torah Story*.

Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide represents the culmination of two decades of research into the intertextual and linguistic connections within the Tanakh by Schnittjer. The book is a cataloging, book-by-book, of exegetical allusions between the books of the Old Testament, rated according to their strength (read: confidence level). Material for the work was compiled from manual research and material generated from an originality program, iThenticate (xlvii).

In its introduction, Schnittjer provides the basic definitions used in the field of intertextuality and his work, such as revelation, allusion, and exegesis (xviii-xix). Surveying the work and methodologies from scholars like Hays, Kugel, von Rad and Fishbane, Schnittjer lays out his criteria for determining allusion and model for interpretation, siding more closely with Hays than the other three (xli). The remainder of the introduction lays out the content and form of the subsequent chapters. Before closing, Schnittjer has this to say to scholars. "Is this reference study comprehensive? No and yes." By no, Schnittjer means that a total cross-reference of intertextuality for any book, much less the Tanakh, is impossible. By yes, Schnittjer means that this work does seek to capture every leading use of Scripture in every book of the Hebrew Bible. After this aside, there is a brief listing of other sources and lists of intertextual links.

The bulk of the book takes up the charge of implementing that methodology. Following the Tanakh ordering of the Old Testament, as opposed to the traditional Christian arrangement, Schnittjer lays out each chapter similarly. First, there is a listing of the *siglia*, followed by a condensed summary of all significant detectable links within the book. Schnittjer then adds in the hermeneutical profile for the book which gives a broad overview on how that book intertextually relates to others. Critical issues regarding the identified links and peculiarities of the book follow.

Each chapter ends with a more verbose discussion of significant textual links, broken out by the context of the link, and their meaning for the book as a whole.

After finishing the books of the Old Testament, Schnittjer adds in one final chapter, which casts a vision for how the Hebrew Bible leads into the New Testament. This chapter is refreshingly rich and brings out the concept of the canonical consciousness and how Scripture seeks to bear witness to the Spirit and Word (872). Schnittjer highlights those multifaceted contexts and horizons that the New Testament authors use to bring the story of Scripture to its zenith in the coming of Jesus. A brief discussion of common linked themes, what Schnittjer calls networks (873), and a glossary appear at the end of the book.

Positively, this book represents a treasure-trove of academic effort. Schnittjer's work has created an impressive reference text of intra-Old Testament linkage in a field that previously lacked any such comprehensive catalog. If not a complete catalog of every significant intertext in the Hebrew Bible, it is assuredly nearly that. Schnittjer elevates his work too beyond just a mechanical record through his detailed notes on how each book tends to use intertexts and relates to others. Readers are left not only knowing where significant links occur but also why the biblical author has used other texts. *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* should be a core reference text for any scholar doing substantial work in the Old Testament.

Schnittjer too should be praised for his introductory chapter, which provides one of the most straightforward and broad introductions to the field of intertextuality that this author has read. Intertextuality is notoriously tricky to pin down succinctly. It is a discipline that has shifting definitions between authors and can prove troublesome to the uninitiated. Schnittjer's introduction offers potential students of the field a boon with his work as it is an excellent starting point covering all of the critical considerations and positions in a short space. Furthermore, Schnittjer's engagement in the field is refreshingly non-sectarian and robust. The text engages with leading authors from numerous backgrounds and traditions, and this only aids its value as an introduction to the field. To provide just a sample, Schnittjer references: Fishbane, Hays, Kugel, Kynes, Miller, Schultz, Sommer, von Rad, Witherington III, and others just in the introduction.

Critically, one may question the rating system employed by Schnittjer because the method, at points, is driven by the evidence and not the evidence by the method. For example, the B level of confidence, the second-best link quality, requires only a single Hebrew root to define a link. Why such a low bar? Schnittjer explains, "It may seem disappointing to have such a low threshold of evidence: one term. Unfortunately, there are a few cases that require this" (xxiii). That means though, that Schnittjer has tailored the method to fit the evidence, contrary to sound practice. While the link given as evidence for this, Josh 9:6-7 cf. Dt 20:15, may be a significant link, this is a weakness in the principles undergirding the method and may weaken Schnittjer's data, allowing weaker links to appear stronger than they are.

A second criticism may be leveled at the omission of some potential intertexts. There are occasional gaps in Schnittjer's list that are present in the works he lists as possible parallels. One example is the linkage between Hab 1:2 and Job 19:7. These two texts share several roots, and indirectly share every noun and verb. This link is not mentioned by Schnittjer, who instead links Job 19 on weaker evidence to Lam 3:6-9 (557), despite the Hab-Job connection being covered by Anderson, whom Schnittjer lists as a resource for Habakkuk. Such omissions are to be expected in such pioneering and expansive work, but also point out that continuing efforts are needed in this area.

Overall, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* is a significant work in the fields of intertextuality and Old Testament biblical studies. It provides a reference point for future investigations into how the Hebrew Scriptures built upon themselves and how Scripture interprets itself. Students should approach this text as a model for how scholars can weigh and determine the strength of exegetical links in a text. Schnittjer provides not only a model but also extensive reasoning and discussion of significant links. This text will help students become familiar with the field of intertextuality as well as the critical questions faced within the sub-discipline. The quality of scholarship and breadth of material easily makes Schnittjer's *Old Testament Use of Old Testament* a first-tier reference work for scholarship.

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Goldingay, John. *The Lost Letters to the Twelve Prophets: Imagining the Minor Prophets' World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022, 232 pages, $23.00, softcover.

John Goldingay is Senior Professor of Old Testament, and David Allan Hubbard Professor Emeritus of Old Testament for Fuller Seminary. Goldingay received his Ph.D. from the University of Nottingham and his DD from the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth. He has published numerous monographs on Old Testament Theology and its study, and most notably, was the author of the *Daniel* volume for the Word Biblical Commentary series.

The Lost Letters to the Twelve Prophets: Imagining the Minor Prophets' World sets out to explore the Minor Prophets by imagining letters to which the prophets were replying. Drawing on a similar model used in *Epistles to the Apostle* by Colin Morris, Goldingay sets out to create plausible conversation partners for various sections within each prophet (ix). The introduction includes a brief summary of the Old Testament timeline, what Goldingay calls the "First Testament," and then a short annotation for the historical *Sitz im Leben* for each of the twelve books (xiii-xviii).

Each of the twelve Minor Prophets receives its own chapter and is laid out in roughly the same order. First, Goldingay gives a brief overview of the timeframe

and ministry of the prophet. These overviews range from several pages, e.g. Hosea (1-4), to a single paragraph, e.g. Nahum (135). Goldingay then presents his various letters with their attendant replies from the biblical text. The author prefaces the letters with a bolded heading and seeks to draw from historically accurate locations and at least plausible naming conventions for them (x). Occasionally Goldingay inserts real people into these created letters; for example, one of the letters written to Hosea comes from "Jonah ben Amittay in Gat-hepher" (37). In reply to these letters, Goldingay inserts the relevant passage from the Minor Prophet and then offers a brief "Background and Foreground" section wherein he exegetes the passage. All Bible passages are drawn from his own work, *The First Testament: A New Translation,* which notably preserves the divine name with vowels, i.e. Yahweh.

After working through all of the Minor Prophets, Goldingay closes with his own personal letter to the collective group (229-230). In it, he views the works of the prophets as hyperbole, but hyperbole with a purpose, foreshadowing the coming calamities and days of Yahweh. This focus on calamity and restoration, he says, calls the reader to prepare themselves for the final and culminating Day of Yahweh. A small index of passages used follows and closes the book.

Positively, Goldingay has created a charming and easy-to-read book for an oft-neglected part of Scripture. The letters are interesting and varied enough to feel authentic as products of multiple writers from multiple contexts. Goldingay's occasional insertion of actual historical figures into these letters aids this authenticity and helps highlight the historical interrelation between the prophets. Goldingay's letters also give helpful windows into the troubles and contexts for each of the Minor Prophets, which is not always easy to do in non-technical work. Readers will appreciate this simplified presentation of the Book of the Twelve.

Despite its novel approach to engagement with the Minor Prophets, Goldingay's work suffers from several critical weaknesses, the first of which regards its approach. While creating artificial dialogue could be helpful in an epistolatory context, that does not guarantee it works for other genres. Most books, but perhaps especially those with a narrative presentation, like Jonah (106-116), are deprived of their narrative style and forced into an artificial arrangement of responses to a letter. One may rightly ask, what value does this bring? It is dubious if Goldingay's approach is helping the reader dig into the text, for the text is no longer as it originally was, either in genre or context. Even for those books which are primarily dialogical, this approach does not work well. For example, in Habakkuk, which contains speech cycles between God and the prophet, the prophet's questions are ignored and replaced by Goldingay's letters. Thus, the reader is given mere hypothetical letters in lieu of Habakkuk's questions from the biblical text.

A second limitation of the book is that it is, necessarily due to length, selective and not comprehensive in its treatment of the Minor Prophets. A reader will be treated to the highlights and key points of the books, but they will not come away

with a full survey of any text. In fact, according to Goldingay's index, only Obadiah is exhaustively covered (232). This selective approach also leads to another problem. By using artificially created questions, Goldingay frames the text for the reader in specific ways. This means that Goldingay has assumed the responsibility for making exegetically significant decisions for the reader without informing them that he has done so. For example, the opening letter to Jonah and Goldingay's subsequent exegesis frames the Assyrians as problematic because they "are an imperial power" and Jonah himself "give(s) no indication of being against foreigners" (110). Both assertations, however, are not in the text itself but represent an interpretive choice that may or may not be correct. A casual reader will be blind to other possible options because the text has been framed for them. If the book's goal is to make the Minor Prophets easier to understand (ix), this represents a perhaps unfortunate choice in presentation.

Overall, *The Lost Letters to the Twelve Prophets: Imagining the Minor Prophets' World* is an intriguing work whose value is not always matched by its style. Goldingay is to be praised for such a creative work and for bringing much-needed widespread attention to the Minor Prophets. Students can approach this text for inspiration on how one can creatively approach presenting the biblical text, but should look elsewhere for more robust and thorough treatments of the Book of the Twelve. Goldingay, himself, has more thorough works on the topic such as *Hosea to Micah* published by Baker Academic. Students might also consider *The Message of the Twelve* by Al Fuhr and Gary Yates for another helpful survey of these texts.

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Jobes, Karen H. *John Through Old Testament Eyes: A Background and Application Commentary.* Edited by Andrew T. Le Peau. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021, 374 pages, $20.99, paperback.

Karen H. Jobes adds to her long list of valuable contributions with *John Through Old Testament Eyes.* Jobes, who serves as the Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor Emerita of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Wheaton College and Graduate School, provides an in-depth dive into the Old Testament background of John, including but not limited to extensive treatment of how John's uses Old Testament texts and themes.

As a commentary, the monograph follows a typical style, although Jobes does not treat each verse individually. Jobes's goal is not to provide a verse-by-verse commentary, but rather to show how the Old Testament influences John's thought and to comment on passages that demonstrate that influence.

In addition to the commentary, Jobes includes discussions entitled "What the Structure Means," "Through Old Testament Eyes," and "Going Deeper." These helpful sections usually offer a broader consideration of issues than commentary

on individual verses would allow, and they often bridge the gap between scholarly exegesis and practical application.

Jobes's commentary is precise, succinct, and accessible. While her focus is on the influence of the Old Testament on John's Gospel, she also spends time discussing debated passages or thorny grammatical issues, including discussion of Greek syntax or textual critical issues as needed (e.g., her discussion of John 8:1-11 on pp. 149-50). The reader benefits from her expertise in Greek, especially her knowledge of the LXX. For a scholar who is known most widely for her work in New Testament exegesis, she demonstrates a keen sensitivity to Old Testament echoes, citations, allusions, and overall influence.

One example of her excellent treatment of the text is her commentary on the first miracle of Jesus, the turning of water into wine at Cana of Galilee. She includes discussion on important details such as the chronological difficulty of John's statement about the third day in 2:1 (pp. 57-58), and the meaning of "sign" from the perspective of both lexical analysis and Old Testament background (p. 61). She places these details within John's overarching design to show Jesus's ministry as the initial fulfillment of many Old Testament messianic expectations and predictions (e.g., Isa 55:1-5; Jer 31:1; Joel 2:19, 24, 3:15; Am 9:13, see p. 59). The new wine Jesus produced was "a small tasting, a sign pointing to Jesus's messianic significance" (p. 59).

Jobes notes that the signs of Jesus can be read on three levels: the level of the "unknowledgable" first reader; the level of biblical-theology with a full awareness both of Old Testament and first century context; and the eschatological-soteriological level that sees Jesus's death and resurrection as the hermeneutical crux of the Gospel (see pp. 63-66). In general, Jobes sees Jesus's signs as a means of confirming his identity as stated in the prologue and explicated in Jesus's teachings (pp. 63-64), an identity which cannot be understood without reference to Old Testament predictions and antecedents.

The reader will no doubt find many gems in the treatment of individual passages, but two contributions of the book deserve particular attention. The first is Jobes's contention that "The resurrection of Jesus was not only a historical event, it was a *hermeneutical* event as well. Without his resurrection and the coming of the Spirit Jesus' life probably would have made little sense" (emphasis original, p. 81). Jobes understands John to be intentionally crafting his account with the resurrection of Jesus as the hermeneutical key. The original disciples could only understand the identity of Jesus, both as eternal Word of God and Israel's Messiah, after the events of his life, death, and resurrection. John understood this, and so he structured his Gospel in such a way to foreshadow the resurrection from the beginning (e.g., John 2:19) and accentuate its significance after it occurred (e.g., John 20:31). Similarly, the fulness of Old Testament symbolism and prophecy is only possible to understand through the lens of the resurrection.

A second strength is Jobes's recognition of the resonances of the Old Testament beyond direct quotations. As an example of this, in her treatment of John 3, Jobes gives significant attention to Jesus as the *sheliach*, the one sent of God. The *sheliach* deserved the full honor of and exercised the full authority of the one who sent him. Jobes notes that John 3 does not include a single specific quotation from the Old Testament, but still the Old Testament clearly shapes "John's understanding of who Jesus is and the significance of his incarnation, death, and resurrection" (p. 94). The Old Testament is baked into the cake, as it were, of John's worldview and authorial aims.

Jobes also highlights the importance of the temple and feasts in John's presentation of Jesus. Indeed, Jobes comments in her conclusion, "Instead of quotations and direct allusions to the texts of the Old Testament, the beloved disciple employs images, metaphors, and the traditions of Israel that originated in the Hebrew Bible, especially those of the temple and the feasts" (p. 320, see also p.109). Jobes's sensitivity to the broader influence of the Old Testament is refreshing, incisive, and perhaps a needed correction to the somewhat fashionable attempts to focus merely on one text's use of another. Jobes does not engage in hyperbole when in her final words she writes, "Reading the gospel of John through Old Testament eyes makes all the difference" (p. 320).

Overall, Jobes's contribution is substantial, both in terms of its quality and its accessibility. Scholars, students, and teachers of the fourth Gospel will greatly benefit from her work and will find this volume a helpful accessory to other commentaries. Jobes's focus on the Old Testament background makes this commentary unique, as far as this reviewer is aware, among resources currently available.

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Ware, James P. *Paul's Theology in Context: Creation, Incarnation, Covenant, and Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019, xiv + 270 pp., $30, paperback.

It would be an exaggeration to say that every scholar of Paul harbors an ambition to write a Pauline theology — but not too great of an exaggeration. The basic continuity among Paul's letters, yet with important contingencies particular to each of them, beckons for synthesis. With *Paul's Theology in Context*, James P. Ware (Ph.D., Yale University), professor of religion at the University of Evansville, tries his hand at this most common of endeavors. Ware succeeds in writing an accessible, engaging theology of Paul for pastors and pastors-in-training, which might also benefit scholars and informed laypersons. He even manages to frame the apostle in some fresh ways.

The Introduction (1–4) briefly sets out the preliminaries. First, Ware writes *Theology in Context* "for clergy, students, and laypeople who wish to enrich their

understanding of the letters of Paul," providing "a basic 'map' or guide to Paul's theology that will illumine and enliven the study, preaching, and teaching of all his letters," though he then adds, "I hope this book will also be of interest to my fellow biblical scholars, as well as to theologians who wish to work in a way conversant with Scripture" (1). Second, what makes this work distinctive among other Pauline theologies, according to Ware, is his twofold emphasis: both how Paul's gospel is "*the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and Scriptures*" (1) and how it "*would have been heard in the ancient gentile world into which it came*" (2). (Here and elsewhere, italics are his.) The first has been well covered; the second, less so, though there has been renewing interest in Paul's relation to the Roman world around him. Third, Ware's study has four foci: creation, incarnation, covenant, and kingdom. And finally, Ware takes the entire thirteen-letter collection to be Pauline, at least in the sense of being written "by Paul in concert with a coworker authorized by the apostle to write on his behalf" (4), though Ware assures that nothing fundamental would change had he restricted himself to the seven undisputed letters.

Part One (5–39), on creation, includes two chapters. The first ("The Apostle of Creation," 7–23) argues that "*the creator God, distinct from his creation, is the fundamental conception within Paul's thought*" (20). Ware faults those who minimize the role of creation in Paul and those who have recently portrayed the apostle as something of a polytheist (Ware cites Paula Fredriksen and Bart Ehrman). To be sure, Ware says, Paul believes very much in other spiritual, invisible powers, but the important dividing line is not between the visible and invisible realms, but between creator and creation. In this sense, there is very much only one God, the Creator, for Paul, and this God was different from the other gods on offer in the ancient world. The second chapter (24–39) Ware titles, "The Good News of the Fall." While pagan worldviews generally took human nature to be flawed and, in one way or another, sought to cope with that reality, Paul instead "offered the promise of a pitch-dark world made shining and luminous once again" (35). In this chapter Ware also gives a brief theological anthropology. For the apostle, we are designed by God to be composite beings: "Body and soul were made for each other" (28).

Part Two (41–91) is the most distinctive section of *Paul's Theology in Context*. In it, Ware turns to the incarnation. Chapter 3 (43–61) sketches "The Two Streams of Expectation" in Jewish thought of Paul's day. The first is well known: the hope for a Davidic messiah. The second is less discussed, but Ware takes to be "the truly central key to [Paul's] Christology" (51): the hope that YHWH would dwell among his people. The incarnation "at one stroke resolved the mysterious and seemingly irresolvable conflict between the two streams" because, for the apostle, Jesus was at once the human king from David's line *and* Israel's God living among his people. The following chapter (ch. 4, "Paul's Gospel of the Incarnation," 62–75) rebuts proposals Ware disagrees with. The pagan myths of gods becoming human are not that close. Paul did not have a "low Christology," nor did he have a "high

Christology" reserved only for the risen Christ. In fact, Ware goes so far as to say, "*Nicene theology is the direct creation of Pauline incarnational theology*" (74). Whereas the creator-creation distinction is the (mostly unstated) foundation of Paul's theology (as noted above), Ware locates "The Epicenter of Paul's Theology" (ch. 5, 76–91) to be the incarnation itself. Today participation is often suggested as the core of Paul's thought, and while "almost right" (88) — most of the chapter concerns how believers do achieve union with the triune God through the work of Christ — Ware finds participation insufficiently Christological. The incarnation sums up the central hopes and convictions of Paul in the figure of Jesus himself.

Part Three (93–136) includes three chapters on the theme of covenant. Chapter 6 ("Paul and the Law in Full Perspective," 95–112) is Ware's concise take on Paul's relation to the law, a topic that has animated much of Pauline scholarship for the past several decades. He navigates between the "new perspective" (as James Dunn), the "two covenants" approach (as Stanley Stowers), and a modified "old perspective" (as Simon Gathercole). For Ware, Ps 143:2 ("… for in your presence no living being is righteous") is of decisive significance. Paul does not have a problem with the law per se, only when the law is understood apart from a wider covenantal, merciful relationship with God. According to chapter 7 ("The Covenant and the Cross," 113–25), it is Jesus's death that fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant and enacts the promised New Covenant, and this love of God differs markedly from the self-serving devotion sought by pagan deities. The covenant brings communion with God. It also brings justification (ch. 8, "Justification within the Covenant," 126–36). In this chapter Ware avoids many traditional binaries: according to him, the "righteousness of God" is both God's own righteousness and that given to humans; it is both our forgiveness and our sanctification. These aspects of "righteousness" can be distinguished but not separated in Paul.

In Part Four (137–97), Ware traces the effects of Jesus's death and resurrection under the title "Kingdom." Chapter 9 ("Easter in Ancient Context," 139–57) indicates how the "good news" would have sounded in the ancient world. According to Ware, bodily death was final among the pagans, even if some believed in a spiritual afterlife or cycles of reincarnation. At the same time, there are indications of a yearning for the final victory of life over death. This is what the Jewish God promised, and Paul proclaimed that Jesus Christ accomplished. Chapter 10 ("The Resurrection of the Body in Paul's Gospel," 158–74) is on 1 Corinthians 15. Against those who see Paul advocating a non-physical or ethereal body, Ware defends the traditional understanding of a bodily resurrection. He notes that the body is the subject across 1 Cor 15:36–54 (e.g., "is sown in decay" but "raised in glory"), and that the verb *egeirō* means "to raise" in the sense of "to sit or stand up," *not* in the sense of "to ascend." Thus, Paul is picturing our current bodies being renewed and standing up from the grave, not our souls ascending to heaven and being given a fundamentally different type of body. Chapters 11 (175–82) and 12 (183–97) turn from the consummated

kingdom (the topic of chs. 9–10) to the inaugurated one that believers now inhabit. Ware relates the future hope to "The New Life" and "The New Law," respectively. The former concerns topics like a Christian's new status, the sacraments, and discipleship, and the latter is on Pauline ethics, applied especially to Christian love and sexuality. In chapter 12 Ware also distinguishes the law of Moses from that of Christ; he writes, "although Christ followers *fulfill* the righteous requirements of the law of Moses, they do not *follow* the law of Moses. They follow the new law of Christ" (183).

What remains of the book is something of a historical appendix. Part Five (199–233), "Paul and Christian Origins," places Paul within a wider scope of early Christianity. Its first chapter (ch. 13, "The Gospel of the Eyewitnesses," 201–16) contends that the earliest Christians were united in quickly according Jesus an exalted status. Ware presents 1 Cor 15:1–11 as his key evidence. Coordinating with the timeline Paul gives of his own life in Galatians 1–2, Ware trances this confession about the resurrection back to within a year or two of Easter morning. The second chapter in this section, and the final one of the book, is "Paul and Peter among the Apostles" (ch. 14, 217–33). Far from the factious beginning of Christianity that some reconstruct, Ware envisions an "*apostolic college*" working collaboratively with each other (218). The chapter title suggests a primacy of Paul and Peter, but at other times Ware places James (the brother of Jesus) and John (the disciple) among the "inner circle" (224), too. The authority of these four, in fact, radiates into most of the New Testament, as Ware places all but one of the twenty-seven books within the orbit of one of these apostles. (In addition to the books attributed to each of the figures, Ware associates Luke, Acts, and Hebrews with Paul; Mark with Peter; and Jude with James; and he links the "John" of Revelation with the anonymous author[s] of the Fourth Gospel and its Epistles.) Paul was no rogue, according to Ware. He was one of the central two-to-four inner apostles, and he was advancing a common cause with the others.

Paul's Theology in Context is a useful guide to the apostle's thought. I enjoyed reading the book. The prose is lively, and I learned a number of things from Ware. It will be especially welcome to Christians who believe that the later orthodox Christianity of the ecumenical councils basically got Paul right. Ware reads all thirteen letters as informing the historical Paul, and he reconstructs an apostle who believes in the Trinity and defends the bodily resurrection, among other matters. Ware's portrait of Paul reminds me particularly of N.T. Wright's, and, indeed, from the start Ware acknowledges his debts to Wright (3 n. 6). While it is hard to produce a definitive list of Paul's central themes, creation, incarnation, covenant, and kingdom are certainly all defensible choices, and they provide a reliable way to organize the apostle's thought. His twofold task of hearing Paul's message against its Jewish and gentile background is wise, as well. From my perspective, the most distinctive and valuable aspect of this work is Ware's attention to Buddhist and Hindu sages, which he

demonstrates were known and read in the first century Roman Empire. Additionally, Ware's lists of primary sources are long and diverse. His book also brims with interesting observations. For one example, on Rom 3:23 ("for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"), Ware corrects that idea that "fall short" indicates that we come up short morally. This is true enough, from Ware's perspective, but not the point here. Instead, *hystereō* means that we are "*destitute* or *bereft* of the glory of God" (32). It is a lament, not an accusation. For another, his defense of the bodily resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 (in ch. 10) is innovative, noting details in the text I, at least, had heretofore missed.

At the same time, I doubt that Ware will win over many who are not predisposed to agree with him. His ambition at times outstrips the evidence he has space to marshal. Some scholars will balk at the very mention of a thirteen-letter collection, despite his assurances that nothing hinges on it. Others will worry about anachronism given, as I have noted already, that Ware's Paul so neatly matches the creeds that would come hundreds of years after his death. (Indeed, in chapter 5, Paul is not only a good Trinitarian, but even a Western one: "*The mystery of the Trinity, in which the Father begets the Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the foundation that underlies Paul's participatory theology,*" 87!) Again, in chapter 6, Ware makes "admittedly a rather bold claim" that he has solved the debate between the old and new perspectives on Paul (96). In all these cases, I am not saying he is wrong to advance these positions. Other scholars have done so — as, for example, Matthew Bates has for a "Nicene" Paul in *Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation* (2012). Rather, I merely imply that it would be impossible for Ware to prove these points within the scope of about twenty pages, which is roughly what he devotes to each of these controversial topics. But perhaps this critique demands too much of the book. After all, Ware writes for only secondarily for a scholarly audience.

I would recommend *Paul's Theology in Context* especially for pastors and those in theological training at a master's level. Although Ware seeks to write for a lay audience, as well, his book would significantly stretch those with only undergraduate studies in the Bible, let alone those with no academic theology. Because he has aimed higher than he meant, though, I would commend this as a resource for scholars. It is not the last word on any subject, but it is one coherent and stimulating organization of Paul's theology.

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Costley, Angela. *Creation and Christ: An Exploration of the Topic of Creation in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020, pp. 385, 94.00€, paperback.

When thinking about what makes the Christology of Hebrews distinctive, perhaps the first image that comes to mind is that of Jesus as high priest. Other topics of perennial interest in the study of Hebrews include the intriguing utilization of the Sabbath and the deployment of tabernacle, temple, and other cultic imagery. Angela Costley draws attention to the important role played by references to creation in Hebrews and argues that the author of Hebrews employs these allusions to creation in order to portray Jesus as the creator who descends to earth in order to lead believers into God's primordial rest. *Creation and Christ* is a revision of the author's 2018 Ph.D. dissertation, which was completed at St. Patrick's College in the Pontifical University of Maynooth, Ireland. Costley currently teaches Greek and Wisdom literature at St. Mary's College in Oscott.

After establishing her research focus, Costley outlines the methodological tools that she will use in order to exegete creation language in Hebrews. Following a line of recent Hebrews scholars (e.g. Neeley, Westfall, and Dyer), Costley utilizes discourse analysis in order to bring clarity to the way in which the author of Hebrews orders their thought. Discourse analysis does not denigrate historical criticism but rather recognizes its limitations and offers a literary, historically oriented set of tools with which to examine ancient texts. When it comes to Hebrews, Costley dates the text generally to the last half of the first century (ca. 60–90 CE), but she does not think that Hebrews offers enough information to, for example, locate the text before or after the fall of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE. The author is unknown, the geographical location is tentatively said to be in Alexandria, and the intended audience was likely to have been of Hellenistic Jewish origins (pp. 32–44).

The literature review is likewise expansive and can be found in chapter 2. This chapter more clearly outlines the topic of creation in Hebrews and highlights the need for Costley's monograph by demonstrating the absence of another such book. Costley highlights other studies of Hebrews and discourse analysis, the application of narrative and rhetorical approaches to Hebrews, the relative absence of creation in thematic studies of Hebrews by Vanhoye and Lindars, and historical critical investigations into the author's possible sources and dialogue partners. One of the nearest neighbors to Costley's study is a 2009 chapter on the cosmology of Hebrews by Edward Adams ("The Cosmology of Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 122–139), but Costley rightly argues that more remains to be done on the theological contribution of creation to the argument in Hebrews.

Having clarified the need for her study and set forth the methodological tools to be employed, the remainder of the book turns to a thorough investigation of five

passages in Heb 1–4. These are Heb 1:2–3; 1:10–12; 2:5–9; 3:1–6; and 4:1–11 (esp. 4:3–4, 9–10). The author of Hebrews opens the address by stating that God has spoken through the Son (Heb 1:2). Costley emphasizes that the Son is identified as the one "through whom (God) made the aeons," which is the most reportable event in the exordium according to her discourse analysis (pp. 91–95). The identification of the Son in Heb 1:2–3 can thus be interpreted in terms of descent and ascent as the Son's work of creation, purification, and session come to the fore at the start of the text. The allusion to the Son's laying of the foundations in the scriptural catena (Heb 1:10) is likewise understood with reference to creation. Whereas the exordium works from creation to descent to ascent, the catena moves from the ascension to Christ's descension and finally to his act of creation. The importance of Jesus's role in creation and the presence of the descent-ascent motif becomes clearer in Heb 2:5–9 as Jesus is the only one for whom humanity's intended original status applies in the present. Focusing attention on Heb 3:4, Costley argues that Jesus's activity in creation provides one of the reasons for the Son's superiority to Moses in Heb 3:1–6. Finally, God's rest and the discussion of Sabbath in Heb 3:7–4:11 are interpreted with a view to God's primordial rest, into which believers can enter due to the Son's entrance ahead of believers as pioneer (pp. 269–287).

Costley enhances her exegetical arguments with a sixteen-page appendix justifying her translations of the chief passages examined in the book (pp. 299–314) as well as an additional appendix examining recent approaches to the macrostructure of Hebrews (pp. 315–323). A substantial bibliography follows along with indexes of sources, authors, and subjects.

Creation and Christ thus draws attention to an important topic that is too often overlooked in studies of Hebrews. By examining the relationship between creation and Christology, Costley sheds fresh light on the Son's role in much of the first four chapters in Hebrews. By emphasizing the Son's activity in creation from the exordium on, she uncovers the presence of a descent-ascent motif into which the presentation of Jesus as high priest may be fitted. In addition, Costley highlights several points of connection to the Wisdom of Solomon and the Epistle to the Hebrews. While the similarity between the portrayal of wisdom in Wis 7:26–27 and the description of Jesus in Heb 1:3 is regularly noted by scholars of Hebrews, Costley patiently and subtly places more sustained focus to parallels in the thought of Wisdom and Hebrews (e.g. pp. 76–77, 123–128).

An additional strength of the book is its thorough examination of nearly every imaginable nook and cranny that can be considered with regard to creation language in Heb 1–4. This thoroughness is evident even in the early chapters of the book on methodology and previous studies, where a sustained introduction to discourse analysis may be found along with a description of related studies that indicate the need for Costley's study. When exegeting Hebrews, Costley's book is similarly expansive in the ground that it covers, suggesting that the house in Heb 3:1–6 should be read with

a view not only to the people of God but also with connotations of the sanctuary and of the cosmos. When studying creation language in the exordium, Costley provides a detailed examination of the word *aion* in Heb 1:2. She traces the development of the term's meaning in the history of the Greek language before giving extended attention to Philo, Septuagintal translations, apocalyptic Second Temple literature, and some New Testament instances of the word. Such a consistently exhaustive study repays close reading, while simultaneously providing an important resource for other scholars of Hebrews.

In sum, *Creation and Christ* is an important addition to scholarship on the Epistle to the Hebrews that draws attention to an underexplored topic in creative ways. By exploring Christ's role as creator in Heb 1–4, Costley offers fresh insight into how one understands not only the depiction of Jesus in the text but also its understanding of salvation. Costley's book will be of particular interest to those who conduct research on Hebrews as well as the libraries who support them.

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Whitfield, Keith S. ed. *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019, pp. 197, $19.99, soft cover.

Trinitarian Theology presents three theological models from scholars of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest U.S. Protestant denomination. The editor Keith S. Whitfield is associate professor of Christian theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Between Whitfield's introduction and conclusion, six chapters follow a multi-perspectives pattern: opening arguments lead to responsive rebuttals. The authors provide a general defense of their Trinitarian models and specifically address the question of eternal relational authority and submission (ERAS). First, Bruce Ware, author of *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (2005) and editor of *One God in Three Persons* (2015), presents ERAS as biblically necessary and historically defensible. Second, Malcolm B. Yarnell, author of *God the Trinity* (2016), conditions ERAS theologically. Third, Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation* (2013) and *The Story of Scripture* (2017), and Luke Stamps, *Thy Will Be Done* (to be published by Fortress Press) criticize ERAS as contradicting the pro-Nicene tradition.

These models differ regarding their grounding. Ware surveys Scripture guided by Hebrews 1-2 to ground ERAS directly, while also providing historical and philosophical support. He states that "since the Bible is our sole ultimate and only absolute authority for knowing rightly who God is, we must listen carefully to how it speaks" before looking to tradition (p. 28). Ware concludes with J. I. Packer's defense of ERAS in *Knowing God* (p. 60). Scripture teaches the Son's eternal obedience, so we must join the tradition in so doing.

Next, Yarnell exalts theology proper as Scripture's arbiter for Trinitarian theology: "Revelation . . . provides the basis for granting the doctrine of God methodological priority" (p. 64). Upon this basis, Yarnell affirms with ERAS that "authority, like the eternal generation of the One, proceeds from the Father to the Son" (p. 153). However, given divine self-existence and simplicity, the Trinity must have one authority and power.

Lastly, Emerson and Stamps affirm a "thick biblicism," affirming Scripture's rule while emphasizing tradition. They primarily allege that "the traditional doctrine," in requiring one willing faculty, contradicts ERAS (p. 110). They describe the pro-Nicene tradition using parallel groupings: (1) nature and persons, (2) will and subsistent modes, and (3) inseparable operations and appropriations (pp. 108-127). This tradition serves as a hermeneutical tool: it is "time-tested conceptual language by which we might defend and explicate all that Scripture teaches about God" (p. 128). ERAS fails as a lens and contradicts this tradition.

I will now identify a main positive from each. Positively, Ware provides clarification with his tradition-informed, Scripture-focused argument. Significantly, Ware counters the claim that he ever rejected eternal generation: "I have never in the past said that the doctrine of eternal generation is wrong, but I have questioned whether Scripture teaches it, and frankly I've puzzled over just what it means" (p. 50-51, n. 24). Ware seems to have held a fairly common, conservative position: the eternal generation analogy communicates the correct, biblical understanding of the Father-Son relationship, even if the analogy's exact nature and direct biblical basis are uncertain. Though ERAS's opponents will desire more, Ware's chapters provide elucidation.

Yarnell's chapters situate his position within the contemporary milieu. Appealing to Stanley Grenz's connotative-denotative distinction, Yarnell locates himself with Scott Swain on the connotative side—the names Father and Son convey their identity "to some extent"—over against Grenz's denotative position—in which names *only* differentiate persons (p. 80). However, Yarnell also contrasts himself with Swain, who cautions against applying the Trinity sociologically. Leaning on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Yarnell supports the Trinity's sociological relevance (pp. 86-88). Yarnell adequately converses with contemporary literature.

Emerson and Stamps provide a helpful overview of Trinitarian method by faith seeking understanding. Anyone familiar with the theology of John Webster or the hermeneutics of Daniel Treier and Kevin Vanhoozer or the retrieval of Scott Swain and Michael Allen will quickly recognize this method. Emerson and Stamps explain the standard descriptors: Spirit-led, ecclesially located, exegetically grounded, canonically patterned, creedally ruled, and dogmatically guided (pp. 98-105). Their model helpfully represents these aspects of an unashamedly faith-filled, non-scientistic theology.

I will now seek to illuminate the contributors' main negatives. While Ware's chapters answer questions raised by opponents, Ware's use of non-traditional language—without certain qualifications—will stimulate more questions. For example, Ware's describing the persons as "accessing" their nature leads Emerson and Stamps to wonder about social trinitarian implications, though Ware clearly rejects social models (pp. 47-48, 159). Whereas social trinitarians define essence generically, Ware defines essence as identity: "Each divine person, in essence, possesses an *equality of identity*" (pp. 18-19, emphasis original). But Ware still leaves the impression of underemphasizing the "concrete-Unity-side" of the Trinitarian paradox. Ware avoids discussing the traditional view that the persons are subsistent relations who inter-dwell one another within the Unity. This silence makes "Trinity in Unity" seem secondary to "Unity in Trinity." Ware could clarify by equilibrating his presentation of the pro-Nicene paradox, as represented in the Athanasian Creed: "Unity in Trinity, *and* the Trinity in Unity."

Yarnell's discussion lacks clear road marks at times, resulting in opacity. Much effort discerns Grenz's denotative-connotative distinction within the flow of Yarnell's presentation. This difficulty may have influenced Whitfield's misplaced labeling of Emerson and Stamps's position as connotative and Ware's as denotative (p. 183). In Ware's position, Father-Son *connote* authority-submission. Emerson and Stamps' position is more denotative: the persons' names "simply (though ineffably) communicate the relations of origin" (pp. 164-166), which only signify subsistent *denotative* ordering (p. 113). Yarnell could have better delineated his discussion.

Emerson and Stamps present the most significant issues. They lean on Stephen Holmes to argue that since the pro-Nicene tradition places the will with the Unity, the persons cannot will distinctly; however, this imposes a false binary. Lewis Ayres has shown that pro-Nicene representatives belie the assumption that "the one divine will is obviously opposed to there being three wills" ("'As We Are One': Thinking into the Mystery," in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, Los Angeles Theology Conference [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014], 94–113; 106). In this way, Emerson and Stamps mischaracterize the tradition, falling short of their method's standard. Thomas H. McCall's response to Holmes applies: "Even *more* historical sensitivity would help" ("Response to Stephen R. Holmes," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of The Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013], 55–60; 59). This "tradition revisionism" strengthens Ware's warning against allowing "tradition" ultimate control. Emerson and Stamps even acknowledge that Scripture presents the Son "as submitting *unto* the incarnation" (p. 164). Their assumed binary disallows their hearing what both Scripture and the pro-Nicene paradox teach: Unity in Trinity of wills, and Trinity in Unity of will.

Trinitarian Theology helpfully provides three theological models from Southern Baptists. The representatives show charity, recognizing wide agreement.

Whitfield has commendably placed these models in conversation and contributed to contemporary theology. Students will follow the arguments more easily with an understanding of how 20th century Trinitarian discussions connect to this forty-year evangelical debate over ERAS. This volume provides students with an up-to-date defense of ERAS by Ware, a relevant conditioning of ERAS by Yarnell, and a presentation of non-naturalistic method in Emerson and Stamps. Students should focus on the scholars' biblical claims, specifically focusing on whether Scripture requires or undermines speaking of distinct wills and authority *within* the one will and authority of God.

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Cottrell, Jack. *Baptism: Zwingli or the Bible?* Mason, OH: The Christian Restoration Association, 2022, 163pp, $14.99, paperback.

Jack Cottrell, arguably the most prolific writer and influential theologian of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, tackles the topic of baptism in yet another accessible book, *Baptism: Zwingli or the Bible?* This text incorporates Cottrell's primary insights on how the Protestant Reformer Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531) changed the course of church history by creating a new view of the meaning of baptism from salvific to merely symbolic. Although this concise book contains previously published material by Cottrell, it is good to have an overview and summary of Cottrell's critique of Zwingli's view of baptism in one small volume. It is certainly handy for the student as well as the scholar and teacher.

Cottrell divides this work into three parts: (1) a review of his Princeton dissertation on Zwingli, (2) his personal views on "Zwinglianism," and (3) a reproduction of "Connection of Baptism with Remission of Sins." (Part Three is the work of the nineteenth century Christian Church theologian J. W. McGarvey which was originally included in his *New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* [1892] but omitted from later editions.)

Part One is divided into two chapters. The first is a rehearsal of Cottrell's first chapter found in *Baptism and the Remission of Sins: An Historical Perspective* (College Press, 1990), edited by David Fletcher. Cottrell briefly surveys some primary New Testament texts on baptism and statements by the church fathers, and then argues that all of church history taught that baptism is the time the sinner receives salvation. This is what Cottrell terms the "biblical consensus" on baptism.

Chapter two is when Cottrell brings his main point into focus that reflects the title of the book: Zwingli discarded the biblical consensus on baptism, creating a brand-new view. With one big stroke, argues Cottrell, Zwingli proclaimed that all church fathers were wrong when they connected baptism with salvation.

Cottrell provides thorough documentation showing how and why Zwingli reaches this new view on baptism: Zwingli (1) denies the Roman doctrine of *ex opere operato,* claiming that all the doctors taught this before him, (2) argues that a sacrament can never save, only the blood of Jesus saves, and (3) assumes a platonic view of matter and spirit, thus concluding that water cannot save because it is inherently inferior to spirit. Additionally, Cottrell discusses Zwingli's theological reasons for rejecting the "biblical consensus" on baptism, such as his views of divine sovereignty, different kinds of baptisms, and divine election.

Finally, Cottrell elaborates on the development of Zwingli's new baptismal theology. Since Roman theology taught the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and original sin, this led to the Roman doctrine of infant baptism. But Zwingli had now rejected the consensus view on the meaning of baptism, so why baptize infants if not for original sin? Cottrell contends Zwingli invented a new reason for pedobaptism, namely, for a sign of the covenant. From this, Zwingli developed an entirely new theology known as covenant theology (or unity)—that there is only one covenant, one people of God, and one covenant sign for all time. In relation to the covenant sign, it was circumcision in the Old Testament, and it was replaced by baptism in the New. Hence, infants ought to be baptized in the New Testament as they were circumcised in the Old.

Although Cottrell focuses on Zwingli's concept of covenant unity up to this point, his primary concern, which is always in view, comes more into focus in Part Two: that Zwingli is the one who rung in the totally new view of baptism as merely *symbolic* and not salvific. He critiques covenant unity and finds it biblically untenable, but he spends two of the three chapters in this part arguing how baptism is not a work of man but a work of God (echoing Martin Luther).

Chapters four and five are practically equivalent. In these chapters, Cottrell maintains that baptism is never defined as a "sign" or "work of law." It is always in context of salvation by faith. Interestingly, Cottrell highlights that a more precise definition of "work" is needed when discussing salvation by faith vs. works. If "work" always means "anything we do," then Jesus and Paul contradict each other since Jesus says in John 6:29 that "the work" one must do to be saved is to "believe in Him whom He has sent" (NASB). Paul, then, cannot mean that "to be justified by faith apart from works" is equivalent to "to be justified by faith apart from anything we do." Paul must be using the term "work" in a more nuanced way, namely, "works of law," i.e., following a law code to be saved.

Cottrell concludes that defining baptism as the time the sinner receives salvation is *not* salvation by works. Is it something "we do" in the general meaning of the word? Yes, but it is not a *work of law* (cf. Paul), as if someone can save himself by following a moral code. Baptism, as faith and repentance, *is* something "we do" to be saved, Cottrell contends. This distinction in the way "works" is used by Jesus and Paul, Cottrell emphatically states, is the most important theological discovery of his career.

This small tome is helpful in numerous ways. The discussions on covenant unity, baptism as merely symbolic, and Paul's use of "works" raise some good questions. It is uncanny that Zwingli's radically new approach to the meaning of baptism has often been overlooked in evangelical scholarship until more recently (see, e.g., *Believer's Baptism*, B&H, 2007; M. Haykin, *Amidst Our Beloved Stands,* B&H, 2022). Cottrell's work on this topic has been around for decades with little or no interaction, even in the works just mentioned parenthetically. Cottrell has made significant contributions to this discussion. It is time to interact with it.

Red flags, however, may be raised for some. Cottrell consistently refers to Zwingli's view of baptism as merely symbolic as "heresy" and says that Zwingli's covenant theology brought about "demonic results," i.e., a new view of baptism (p. 77). For many, such language may be considered overly exaggerated. "Heresy" is typically reserved for teachings like Arianism and the like. Another overstatement may include "most Evangelicals have adopted Zwingli's new rationale for baptism" (p. 79). This seems strained. Many evangelicals view baptism as an outward sign of the salvation internally realized, which Zwingli outright rejected (as Cottrell even notes).

Others may find one of Cottrell's main points objectionable: that Zwingli rejected the "biblical consensus" on baptism and created an entirely new one (p. 49). Cottrell argues that Christians had *always* taught baptism was for salvation and never as a symbol of salvation. Here, one might point out, for example, that Basil of Caesarea (AD 330-379) referred to baptism as a symbol (e.g., see *On the Holy Spirit,* 15). Of course, others have, too, throughout history before Zwingli. Some may conclude that Cottrell overstates his case or needs to nuance his views a little more.

Finally, a word might be said on Cottrell's brief survey of the church fathers' view of baptism. To support his "biblical consensus," Cottrell refers to Thomas Aquinas and Tertullian. Some may question the use of these fathers, considering that they have traditionally been understood to support the Roman Catholic view of *ex opere operato*, or baptismal regeneration. Certainly, this is not Cottrell's view. His view of baptism as salvific is much more nuanced, and he rejects baptismal regeneration. But, then, one may wonder why he employs Aquinas and Tertullian to support his view?

Cottrell's book is not a deep, academic study, but it is surely a good addition to the discussion of baptism. If the student or theologian wishes to understand Cottrell's baptismal view succinctly and interact more with Zwingli's influence upon this doctrine, this book will accomplish these goals. It is written primarily for those in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, so those outside this tradition may find the biblical, theological, and historical discussion unconvincing or perhaps too shallow. For a deeper study, Cottrell's PhD dissertation and two chapters in the book edited by Fletcher (cited earlier) are highly recommended.

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Cortez, Marc, Joshua R. Farris, and S. Mark Hamilton, eds. *Being Saved: Explorations in Human Salvation*. London: SCM, 2018, pp. 361, $56, paperback.

Being Saved is a collection of essays circling around the twin topics of "theological anthropology and soteriology" (p. xiii). The essays explore classic systematic theological categories while also engaging with other disciplines of enquiry about the human condition. The editors acknowledge that this creates a wide variety in the essays, but they seek to avoid "a homogenous approach to this multi-levelled discussion" (p. xv). This approach makes clear several different modes of theological enquiry for Christian theology. By juxtaposing them in one volume, it serves as a sourcebook for contemporary questions about soteriology and about the interaction between soteriology and philosophy. Although a four-part division provides structure to the book, some essays fall more neatly into the given categories than others.

The first section, "Sin, Evil and Salvation," centers on cosmic issues, or those outside the individual person. After initial forays into God and time ("Identity through Time," R. T. Mullins) and idealism ("Divine Hiddenness," Trickett and Taber), there are three essays on sin and atonement. Jonathan Rutledge rejects "Retributivism", defined as the claim that "the punishment of wrongdoers is required because wrongdoers deserve to be punished" (p. 41). He argues retributivism as a philosophical position is open to several objections, and then interprets the book of Romans as coherent without retributivism. Thus, retributivism and its theological counterpart, penal substitution, are to be rejected and replaced with a "restorative" purpose to God's punishments (p. 51). Joshua Farris and S. Mark Hamilton ("Reparative Substitution") probe how their own view of the atonement is "efficient", that is, how it accomplishes something definite. While acknowledging that Christ's death is a type of substitution, they wish to focus attention on the repayment of honor to God rather than on the endurance of a penalty. Daniel Houck engages with Abelard on original sin, but perhaps a next step would be to apply this to contemporary ways of expressing the doctrine.

The second section is the "The Nature of Salvation" and asks about the ontology of salvific change. What is God actually saving? Contributions from Oliver Crisp ("Theosis and Participation") and Myk Habets ("Spirit, Selfhood and Salvation") continue larger projects for these authors. Crisp's desiderata for a definition of "participation" in God are insightful: (1) a model that is closer than our closest human relationships, (2) one that unifies us with God, but (3) one that does not result in the loss of the individual human. Adonis Vidu ("Ascension and Pentecost") addresses the sending of the Spirit as part of the divine missions. He seeks to avoid saying that Christ "merits" the sending of the Spirit since this introduces a sense of compulsion into the godhead. Kate Kirkpatrick ("Saved by Degrees?") finds that the early Augustine viewed salvation as continuous, "an ongoing process of becoming" (p.

135). The payoff from such a focus on "being" is somewhat undeveloped. Benjamin Arbour ("Virtue Epistemology") calls for deeper interaction between theology and epistemology.

The third section, "The Process of Salvation," uses the traditional categories of the *ordo salutis*. Andrew Loke ("Doctrine of Predestination") defends Molinism against an objection centered on the physical conception of new human persons. How and in what way is God involved in the individuation of new human beings? He believes a Molinist account can draw from both Creationism and Traducianism for explaining God's involvement, but the "creationist" side is unclear—since it seems, in his view, that the shapes of individual humans (particularly that of Judas Iscariot) exist apart from God's creative decision. John Fesko ("Priority of Justification") continues his work of showing how traditional categories of justification and sanctification are distinct yet unified. His interaction with Marcus Johnson evidences how recent discussions that emphasize "union with Christ" are helping to refine a traditional Reformed position on the process of salvation. Adam Johnson ("Barth and Boethius") emphasizes Barth's account of salvation primarily through the lens of a "representative substitute." A consistent emphasis on human identity in Christ should lead to a form of wholeness and security. W. Madison Grace ("Being Christ") explores Bonhoeffer's "communal notion of personhood" with special reference to the church as the place in which Christ exists in the world. Such a view should lead Christians to view salvation in communal terms, but the implications of such a view are unclear. James Arcadi ("Redeeming the Eucharist") uses Edward Schillebeeckx as a resource for exploring the eucharist and justification. "Transignification" means that God "deems" the bread and wine to be body and blood, and so they are. While avoiding questions about substance and accidents for the eucharist, transignification would need to answer (or embrace!) the charge of "legal fiction" when speaking about justification—another form of "deeming." Paul Helm continues his work analyzing Jonathan Edwards in regard to regeneration ("Regeneration and the Spirit"). There is no doubt that Edwards's tone and vocabulary differ from earlier Reformed representatives such as Stephen Charnock. Helm appears to see weaknesses in Edwards's use of the "new simple idea" as a term for the crucial change that brings about conversion. Evaluation of Edwards on this point is still ongoing: if he has appropriated categories from John Locke, in what ways do these categories make his view of regeneration more or less helpful?

The final section, "The Body, the Mind and Salvation," includes more interaction with philosophical perspectives on the nature of human being. Carl Mosser ("Two Visions") presents transhumanism as a rival eschatology to traditional Christian views. He finds an alternative in the Christian idea of "deiform perfectibility," that is, a form of deification. Hans Madueme ("Theological Musings on Mental Illness") addresses the challenge of mental illness for the Christian category of sin. He calls on psychologists to recognize the importance of sin and sanctification for mental

healing. The crucial insight is that sin "truly discloses our hearts" (p. 298 n34), whether or not the act of disclosure is conscious and willed. Joanna Leidenhag ("Saving Panpsychism") believes that Christian soteriology can be helped and extended by viewing *soul* as the fundamental reality of the created universe. Such a view would extend hope that a saving experience exists for non-human creatures who have minimal subjectivity. Marc Cortez ("Body and the Beatific Vision") concludes the volume with an analysis of the resurrection body and the beatific vision. Jonathan Edwards, among others, suggested that the body was necessary for a proper vision of God, but Cortez finds these reasons unsatisfying. Better to speak about the resurrection body as fulfilling other purposes of God such as the image of God and human life in embodied community.

The studies in this book cover a huge swath of contemporary questions on soteriology and theological anthropology. The editors acknowledge the diversity of approaches (p. xv), and especially the different uses of philosophy and theology. A particular difference appears about whether the analytic philosophical tradition can provide a mode of discourse to evaluate theological vocabulary—even when the theological positions have not utilized that mode of discourse. Being Saved sets a full table of options and topics and will be a useful resource for Christian theologians.

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Gallaher, Brandon. *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp.318, £98, hardback.

Brandon Gallaher is senior lecturer at the University of Exeter, specializing in twentieth century Orthodox theology and modern theology more broadly. The breadth of Gallaher's interests are on display in this fine monograph. *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* dialogues with three generative modern theologians each representing a distinct tradition: Sergei Bulgakov, Karl Barth, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. The book is organized round a set of questions related to the form of modality applicable to God's immanent and transitive acts, but these particular issues offer an entryway into some of the most pressing debates in contemporary theology related to divine aseity, divine freedom, the reliability of our knowledge of God, and the relation between God in Godself and God's acts in the world.

Gallaher begins outlining three sorts of freedom and three corresponding forms of necessity. These versions of freedom and necessity provide an interpretive grid according to which his three dialogue partners are interpreted and then critically assessed and evaluated. In view of space constraints, I will move directly to summarize the dogmatic conclusions for which Gallaher advocates throughout the book. While some limitations arise in leaping straight to Gallaher's conclusions and

moving briskly past his learned interpretations, his account of each dialogue partner is shaped at every turn by his constructive aims.

Gallaher worries that a monistic collapse obtains if the form of necessity pertaining to Godself likewise applies to God's decision to create and redeem. He affirms therefore that God could have refrained from creating without being essentially different than God is. However, Gallaher also worries that to straightforwardly affirm the contingency of creation might disconnect theology and economy, introducing an unreliability into God's revelation and undermining the integrity of God's loving action in the world. He therefore argues that once God has contingently decided to create, creation *becomes* necessary for God. This necessity is described robustly as an "internal reality for God as God" (p. 221). I suspect statements such as this aim to rule out that creation is merely hypothetically, rather than absolutely necessary (hypothetical necessity implies that creation is necessary insofar as God has willed to create, but because creation is necessary only on the hypothesis that God has freely willed it, rather than being necessary for God's ontological completion or fulfilment, creation is not and never becomes *absolutely* necessary). His three dialogue partners are evaluated by their ability to secure these dogmatic affirmations. In radically truncated summary, Gallaher thinks Bulgakov and Barth fail to secure God's genuine freedom to have refrained from creating, whereas Balthasar fails to consistently affirm that creation becomes necessary for God.

To concretely express these largely formal dogmatic affirmations, Gallaher engages in some audacious trinitarian speculation, positing that God's ontological completion 'awaits' the human act of Jesus of Nazareth electing the Father as his Father which constitutes the divine being. In order to secure the genuineness of God's dependence upon Jesus Christ—and therefore God's dependence upon creation since Jesus is a creature and a representative of creation—Gallaher suggests that the Father draws a veil over divine knowledge of what Jesus will decide. There is genuine uncertainty both in God's knowledge and in God's ontological self-determination until Jesus has determined the divine being. These constructive proposals are well adapted to secure what Gallaher thinks an account of the relation between theology and economy and divine freedom and necessity needs to affirm but nonetheless, questions remain.

For example, Gallaher is invested in a dialectical approach in which seemingly contradictory claims are set alongside one another without clear harmonization. This strategy has an important pedigree in modern theology. However, as other reviewers like Tom McCall have noted, there is little control over what counts as a valid dialectical juxtaposition for Gallaher. At many points, Gallaher faults his dialogue partners for remaining merely at the level of "assertion" rather than offering a robust defense of the coherence of their views (pp. 88-9, 160, 229, 232). Yet one might think his own dialectical approach likewise resides at the level of mere assertion, in that

he asserts two seemingly contradictory claims without demonstrating how they can be reconciled.

For example, one of Gallaher's central claims is that while God needs the world this does not undermine divine aseity because this need is rooted not in external coercion but a free divine act of love: "This need . . . is not for God Himself (his self-development) but for love of the world" (p. 222; see also p. 240). Yet if God by a divine act of will decides to make the world and the free choices of a creature or creatures necessary to the actualization of the divine being—as Gallaher affirms—then it *becomes* the case that God depends upon something outside Godself for divine self-development. This means that something external to God comes to exercise a coercive determination upon God, since it is not wholly "up to God" who God will be essentially. Furthermore, Gallaher affirms that God wills" creation to enrich Him[self] as an additional gift" (p. 222) and that "God necessarily must ecstatically love beyond Himself to be Himself as love" (p. 184). If creation enriches God, enhancing divine love, then one might think either God becomes *more* perfect than God would be without the world, or God's love for creation is disconnected or at a distance from God's being. This latter claim is something which all three of Gallaher's dialogue partners and Gallaher himself are keen to avoid. But in that case, for God to be the perfect God God *is*, God needs the world, not merely for the world's sake but for the sake of God's own perfection. This lacuna drives straight to the heart of Gallaher's central claim that while God makes the world necessary for Godself, God need not have done so to be the God God is (pp. 22-3, 34-5, 88, 165). Either God's love for the world adds nothing to who and what God is essentially, which Gallaher denies, or the world enhances God insofar as it enhances the actualization of God's love. In that case, God needs the world for the sake of God's own ontological *perfection* not merely for the sake of an altruistic love for the world. Unless this highly dialectical—*i.e.* seemingly contradictory—set of claims can be reconciled, there is a danger that Gallaher's view implies against his intentions that God is free, only in that God could have been less perfect because less loving than God actually is in creating the world. This amounts, for those who affirm with Anselm, Barth, Balthasar, and many others, that God essentially *is* "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," to a seemingly nonsensical claim that God could have willed to be worse than God is and therefore to have willed not to be God.

That I have pressed these matters is a testament to the erudition and creativity of Gallaher's proposals. There are a host of merits to Gallaher's work, including the way in which he situates each of his dialogue partners within post-Kantian idealism and the creativity and sensitivity of both his interpretations and his constructive theological arguments. It is invigorating to read a book whose theological proposals

are this bold. The monograph eminently repays careful attention, offering a lasting contribution to central questions in contemporary systematic theology.

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Sarisky, Darren, ed. *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*. T&T Clark Theology. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017, pp. ix + 359, $175, hardback ($42.95, paperback).

The present anthology is an essential read for those interested in the question of how classical texts within the Christian tradition can and should be theologically "retrieved" for the contemporary theological task. The volume's editor, Darren Sarisky, previously served as Departmental Lecturer in Modern Theology at the University of Oxford before taking up his current post of Senior Research Fellow in Religion and Theology at Australian Catholic University's Melbourne campus. Sarisky has done readers a great service by gathering a star-studded cast of scholars to guide readers through the thicket of representative figures, movements, and types of theological retrieval that have become prominent in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In his introduction to the volume, Sarisky rightly distinguishes between *correlation* and *retrieval* theologies—the "two main ways" that Christian theologians tend to engage with the present situation (p. 1). Whereas the former seeks "to correlate elements of the Christian tradition with aspects of modern culture" in a conversational manner for sake of helping the Christian message stay intellectually relevant, the latter is "less concerned to secure the plausibility of Christian theology … and more focused simply on attending to, indwelling, and commending what they take to be the most compelling articulations of the Christian gospel" (pp. 1-2). In curating these selected essays into a single volume, Sarisky aptly notes that theologies of retrieval are more "a set of overlapping concerns and substantive commitments" rather than "a monolithic system" or "well-defined school of thinking" (p. 5). The "exploration" and "appraisal" of such theologies here is thus meant to "further develop and refine theologies of retrieval," so as "to nudge the whole debate forward" (p. 5).

Nevertheless, though "exploring" and "appraising" theologies of retrieval are the book's explicit aims, its chapters reveal that the work's seven parts are much more weighted towards exploration than appraisal. In part one, John Milbank and Stanley Hauerwas reflect upon modernity's genealogies in different ways (chs. 1-2). In part two, distinct confessional inflections regarding retrieval are proffered through essays by Andrew Louth on Orthodoxy (ch. 3), Michael Allen on the Reformed Tradition (ch. 4), and Jennifer Newsome Martin on the *Ressourcement* movement within twentieth-century Roman Catholic Theology (ch. 5). In part three, part two's chapters are complemented by reflection upon three twentieth-century figures. In

this regard, Paul Garvrilyuk writes about Orthodox theologian Georges Florovsky (ch. 6), Kenneth Oakes writes about Reformed theologian Karl Barth (ch. 7), and David Grumett writes about *Ressourcement* theologian Henri de Lubac (ch. 8). Parts four and five then return to a more topical format. In part four, Michael C. Legaspi, Gabriel Flynn, and Darren Sarisky explore retrieval's relationship to Scripture and Tradition from various angles (chs. 9-11). In part five, Fred Sanders, John Webster, and Nicholas M. Healy respectively showcase how retrieval might take shape for key doctrines like the Trinity, creation, and ecclesiology (chs. 12-14).

Despite the fact that the exploratory essays offered in part six are editorially branded by Sarisky as "test cases" for retrieval (p. 4), they come across as being heavily correlationist in tenor. This is because in this part of the volume, Brian Bantum, Ruth Jackson, and Gavin D'Costa respectively reflect upon theological retrieval's relevance for "untraditional" conversations such as mulatto theology, gender and theology, and Christianity's relationship to other religions (e.g., Roman Catholicism's relationship to post-Holocaust Judaism) (chs. 15-17). Through what can be interpreted as an implicit suggestion regarding the methodological potential of a marriage between retrieval and correlation—or, better yet, retrieval *as* correlation—it is here in part six that the volume is at its most innovative and critically constructive. Bantum, for example, asks: "Is not Christian existence itself a retrieval project, a return to Judaic sources and structures while also reimagining them in their contemporary moment?" (p. 262). In furthering this point, Bantum seeks to relativize "traditional theologies" while elevating the status of "so-called 'contextual' theologies" by way of intentionally politicizing the crucial "question of which structures get retrieved" (pp. 262-63). Bantam then proposes that "theological retrieval in our racialized moment requires a mulattic theological mode" over against "reclamation of the Nicene Creed or orthodox formulations" as have normally been typical of the retrieval tradition (p. 263). Along such lines, a key source of retrieval for Bantum's mulattic mode is the ubiquitously evil black experience of plantation that "does not allow us easy resolutions" (p. 275). Instead, such an experience serves as a signal "that we cannot be 'post' anything (racial, gender, Christian, liberal)" (p. 277). Rather, "we must navigate the world, our bodies, our histories as they are, confessing the ways white supremacy has so deeply distorted our sight, while also negotiating the ways in which our lives are bound together" (p. 277). Further, Jackson, focusing in an arguably correlationist manner on gender's relation to retrieval theology, adds to this kind of engagement through her asking of "how a retrieval approach to theology might work when concerns about gender become prominent," particularly when not occasioned in reaction to "androcentric norms" (p. 288).

After seventeen exploratory chapters, the book concludes in part seven with only two "Critical Appraisals" via William E. Myatt's essay on David Tracy's critical theology of retrieval (ch. 18) and Martyn Percy's pessimistic essay on the relatively recent "recovery" of the church's healing ministry within charismatic circles (ch. 19).

First, even Myatt's essay can be seen as being more exploratory than appraising, as Tracy's work—typically received as critical of retrieval theologies—is effectively reframed as its own critical type of retrieval theology (p. 330). Second, whether or not Percy's argument rests upon hermeneutical assumptions which some will find ideologically dubious, Percy's essay seeks to disavow one retrieval movement by way of its own act of retrieval. Percy's liberationist insistence that Jesus's miraculous works in the Gospels were intended to rectify the concrete political, religious, and societal injustices that underlay disadvantaged social groups is noteworthy. After all, it is on this basis that Percy claims the 1980s Signs and Wonders movement should not be described as a true instance of biblical "retrieval" (as its proponents have attested) but should instead be seen as a theologically suspect "bourgeois spiritualization of divine power" for middle-class individuals who are already healthy and wealthy (see pp. 337, 350). Alas, since neither Myatt nor Percy are really engaged in the critical task of appraising the "Theologies of Retrieval" movement as a whole, the promise of "appraisal" made by the book's title ultimately goes unfulfilled (unless, of course, we consider Bantum's and Jackson's exploratory chapters as inadvertently fulfilling this role by way of their subversion of retrieval's traditional categories).

Sadly, there is no concluding editorial chapter to inspire next steps for readers. Even so, serious students of theology (new and old) will find much to gain and appreciate throughout the entire volume. The book's employment of first-rate scholars to impart a thorough exploratory summary of the most important theologies of retrieval to date means that readers of this work will be well-equipped through it to directly engage the continuing conversation surrounding theological retrieval, both in general and in detail.

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Robinson, David S. *Christ and Revelatory Community in Bonhoeffer's Reception of Hegel*. Dogmatik in der Moderne 22. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018, pp. xv + 260, €69.00, paperback.

David Robinson was recently appointed as the R. Paul Stevens Assistant Professor of Marketplace Theology and Leadership at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada. The text under review is based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Edinburgh. In it, Robinson seeks to recast Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel in a highly nuanced manner that is ultimately more positive than most previous appraisals. Rather than "demolition," "revolt," or "confrontation," Bonhoeffer's reception is seen as aiming to "repair" aspects of Hegel in "*eclectic* and *Christologically intent"* ways (pp. 11-12). For Robinson, such "*intent*" is especially apparent in Bonhoeffer's transposition of Hegel's "revelatory" notion of "God existing as community" to that of "Christ

existing as community"—a significant move since this latter phrase is often a shorthand for Bonhoeffer's overall program (p. 16).

In comparison to earlier studies of the Bonhoeffer-Hegel question, Robinson's approach differs in three ways (p. 17). First, whereas much of the previous scholarship placed inordinate attention upon Bonhoeffer's second dissertation (*Akt und Sein* [1931]), Robinson's approach is diachronic with regard to Bonhoeffer's corpus (pp. 16-17). Second, Robinson seeks to more precisely account for Bonhoeffer's and Hegel's differing socio-political contexts rather than buying into the "lingering insinuation that Hegel was a proto-apologist for the Third Reich" (pp. 17-18). Finally, each section begins with treatment of Hegel on Hegel's own terms before moving to Bonhoeffer's reception, avoiding conflation of Hegel "with the neo-Hegelianism of Bonhoeffer's time" (p. 18). Robinson's distinctive approach results in a weighty original study that deserves serious consideration by Bonhoeffer scholars. Others interested in an up-to-date, albeit advanced-level engagement with Bonhoeffer or Hegel will also find Robinson's efforts pay great dividends.

The book unfolds in three parts. In part one, Robinson offers two instances in which Bonhoeffer's unnuanced portrayal of "Idealism" as "self-confinement" has obscured how his thought is indebted to the "sociality of reason" in Hegel (p. 18). In this regard, chapter one traces how the "human sociality" correlated with Hegel's "objective *Geist*" influences Bonhoeffer's recovery of "Word before *Geist*" and "revelation in hiddenness," and affects Bonhoeffer's shift of subject from Hegel's "God existing as community" to "Christ existing as community" as well as Bonhoeffer's shifting of "ecclesial" action from Hegel's reciprocal "confession" to "intercession" (pp. 26, 61). Chapter two then explores Bonhoeffer's exposition of Genesis 1-3 in *Creation and Fall* (1932-33), revealing a dependence upon Hegel's account of fallen humanity's perpetually "cleaving" mind, i.e., "a drive for unity in the knowledge of good-evil that in turn divides the knowing subject" (p. 89). On this basis, Robinson observes that Bonhoeffer subverts Hegel's supposed "knowledge" of "primal humanity as a volatile composite of nature and *Geist*" (p. 89). The ethical and political implications of this postlapsarian epistemological impossibility are hinted at, particularly through a contrasting of Hegel's and Bonhoeffer's respective usages of first-person pronouns and through comment upon Bonhoeffer's employment of the Hegelian terms *Aufhebung* (noun) and *aufheben* (verb) in "critical response to Hegel" (pp. 89-90). Robinson's treatment of the running debate over how Bonhoeffer's usage of these terms should be rendered in English to consistently hold together the tension of their "negating," "preserving," and "elevating" senses, as opposed to the many instances in which translators have made unequivocal interpretive decisions for readers, is both thorough and convincing (pp. 59-61, 87-89, 121).

In part two, Robinson turns his attention to Bonhoeffer's Christology lectures (1933). Chapter three argues that Bonhoeffer's polemic against Hegel's "docetic" distinguishing of "Idea" and "Appearance" serves as a foil in resourcing Bonhoeffer's

desire to begin with a united Christology rather than with abstract conceptualizations of the two natures (pp. 19, 124-25). While Robinson here covers whether Hegel should be suspected of "pantheism" (pp. 109-11), the anachronous but important question of Hegel's relationship to what Karl Krause labeled as Hegel's "panentheism" in 1828 could perhaps have been touched upon in a footnote, especially since many see "panentheism" as part of Hegel's legacy for later theologies. That minor scruple aside, Robinson's persuasive discussion surrounding Bonhoeffer's *Menschenlogos-Gegenlogos* dialectic turns upon the divine-human Christ as the "counter-logos" (instead of earlier translations of *Gegenlogos* as "anti-Logos" or "against reason"), so as to establish "Christology as 'the invisible, unrecognized, hidden centre of science [*Wissenschaft*]'" (pp. 117-19). Chapter four then discusses Christ's "real presence," not only with respect to the Eucharistic sacrament, but also Bonhoeffer's view of the "disruptive" preached Word "as sacrament" (pp. 19-20, 152). As Robinson points out, Hegel emphasized the spirited community's role in doctrinal transmission whereas Christ is "presence" rather than "doctrine" for Bonhoeffer (p. 20). Further, Hegel prioritized "the self-sufficient 'Idea'" whereas Bonhoeffer stressed instead "the contingency of [the Word's] 'Address'" (p. 20).

Unlike most previous studies of Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel, part three moves the discussion into Bonhoeffer's post-academic "confessing" period (p. 20). Through engagement with *Discipleship* (1937) and *Ethics* (early 1940s), Robinson pinpoints Bonhoeffer's and Hegel's differing political situations to show how Bonhoeffer's "confessing" identity was formed in reaction to Hegel's era of "deconfessionalisation" (p. 20). In view of differing interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, chapter five traces Bonhoeffer's diagnosis of Hegel's "French revolutionary" Jesus as leading to a "docetic-Idealist ecclesiology" that eventually led to "state overreach" (p. 20). Bonhoeffer correctively posits "Jesus' social teachings as the basis for a seminary community that could renew the distinction between church and state" (p. 192). Even so, Robinson argues that Bonhoeffer here was not truly anti-Hegel so much as he was against "a brutal, sub-rational Reich, the likes of which Hegel could not have foreseen" (p. 192). Chapter six then seeks to untangle Hegel's "culturally prejudiced mind" with regard to *Volk,* race, and "world-history" towards a more nuanced reception that accounts for Hegel's own criticisms of "nationalist expressions in his time," including the notion that poor treatment of foreigners could cause the state to "forfeit its own principle" (p. 195). This is worth comparing to Bonhoeffer's assessment of the Nationalist Socialist state's "self-negation" due to its marginalizing of Jewish people (p. 195). A fascinating case study of W.E.B. Du Bois's race-critical engagement with Hegel is offered as an alternative to the neo-Hegelianism that was contemporary to the Third Reich (pp. 199-202) before Robinson explores Bonhoeffer's embracing of "an emerging global ecumenism" as well as "the difference between Bonhoeffer's attempt to discern the 'form of Christ' in history and Hegel's work to track the 'shapes of *Geist*'" (p. 227). What ultimately emerges is

Bonhoeffer's "particular account of the whole [that] leads to a fuller reckoning with those on the 'underside of history', particularly diasporic peoples" (p. 227). Given all this, it is not difficult to see how the discussions featured in this third part can serve as a theological resource for contemporary dialogue surrounding matters of racial, multicultural, and religious diversity (pp. 236-37).

Overall, Robinson succeeds handsomely with regard to his sustained critical treatment of Bonhoeffer's reception of Hegel. Renewed interest in both Bonhoeffer and Hegel in recent years makes the book timely, especially since publication of the critical edition of Bonhoeffer's works in English was only finally completed in 2014.

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Bergren, Theodore A. *1 Clement: A Reader's Edition*. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2020, pp. 205, $22.95, paperback.

The letter now known as 1 Clement is an important early Christian text that has the potential to shed light on Jesus followers in the areas of Rome and Corinth, to enable readers to see more clearly what created division in early Christian communities, to observe how one author or group of authors attempts to bring about unity, and to illustrate both the variety of ways in which early Christians could interpret scriptural texts and the variant forms in which scripture could be quoted. Yet it is a long letter that can be challenging for the uninitiated to read in its entirety. This may be true even when 1 Clement is translated into a modern reader's first language, never mind the original Greek. Theodore Bergren's *1 Clement: A Reader's Edition* offers a chance for intermediate Greek readers who likewise know English to read 1 Clement without needing to look up every unknown word in a lexicon. Bergren is an emeritus professor in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Richmond, who has conducted significant research on the Latin works of 5–6 Ezra while also editing key indexes to be used when studying the Latin translations of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. His wide-ranging linguistic capabilities make him well-placed to edit a volume like the one currently under review.

Bergren keeps the introduction brief, but it is worth highlighting several important points in this concisely written section. He dates the letter of 1 Clement to the latter decades of the first century CE and leaves open the possibility that the traditional dating in the late 90s is most likely (p. vii). The reason for the letter concerns turmoil that has erupted in the Corinthian church, probably concerning a group of younger members who marginalized members of the established community hierarchy. Bergren rightly notes 1 Clement's familiarity with Greek Jewish scriptures and the author's likely knowledge of some documents now included in the New Testament. An appendix contains a fuller list of citations and allusions in the letter (pp. 187–190). The author of 1 Clement remains unknown, but the text came to be associated with

Clement of Rome in the centuries after it was written. The introduction also wrestles with the authority that 1 Clement had among early readers in Christian communities across the Roman Empire.

After covering these and other traditional introductory issues regarding 1 Clement, Bergren introduces the reader's edition of 1 Clement in more detail. A Greek text of 1 Clement appears on the left-facing page, while English glosses are organized verse-by-verse in order of appearance on right-facing pages. The Greek text comes from Lightfoot's second edition of 1 Clement (1890) with slight emendation. The glosses include the lexical form of the word, the parts of speech, and definitions. Bergren argues that students can avoid the incessant and often unhelpful task of looking up words in dictionaries. They can focus instead on the more profitable tasks of translating, parsing, and grammatical study. As he rightly notes, students of biblical studies may be familiar with this way of reading from using other reader's editions, such as those produced by the United Bible Societies (Donald R. Vance, George Athas, and Yael Avrahami, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: A Reader's Edition* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2015]; Barclay M. Newman and Florian Voss, *The UBS Greek New Testament: A Reader's Edition* [Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2015]). Bergren's selection of 1 Clement is significant because it enables students to become more familiar with "the historical and ideological horizons" of early Christianity and forces students to translate a text that is not as well-known and thus not as easily memorized as the New Testament (pp. x–xi).

The text of 1 Clement is easy to read with comfortably wide spacing between each line. The volume is likewise simple to navigate. Since *1 Clement: A Reader's Edition* contains only a single text, the physical size of the book makes for a pleasant reading experience because it is not as bulky as some reader's editions of larger text collections. It can easily be held and maneuvered for accessible study. While the Greek font that is utilized appears somewhat old-fashioned, the selection of the gloss words has been astutely made. Words that are not found on the adjacent right-facing page can be looked up in a small lexicon at the back of the book (pp. 173–185). The brevity of the introduction encourages immediate engagement with the Greek text of the letter and does not pull the reader's attention away to other issues in the study of 1 Clement. A bibliography offers additional editions to explore and opportunities to study how other scholars have discussed 1 Clement (pp. 191–193). Yet the focus of this edition is clearly on reading the Greek text of 1 Clement. For those nearing the end of their second year of Koine Greek study, this edition of 1 Clement will be practical and offer useful opportunities to expand one's knowledge of the Greek language, early Christian scriptural quotation, and the experiences of believers living in Rome and Corinth.

The volume is thus to be highly recommended for students of Greek who are interested in expanding their reading horizons in early Christian literature, for professors who teach intermediate to advanced Koine courses and are considering

reading materials, and to libraries who cater to such audiences. Bergren's edition joins the reader's editions of the Apostolic Fathers edited by Alan Bandy (*A Greek Reader's Apostolic Fathers* [Eugene: Cascade, 2018]) as well as Shawn Wilhite and Jacob Cerone (*Apostolic Fathers Greek Reader: The Complete Edition* [Wilmore: GlossaHouse, 2019]) in providing those who are interested in the first and second centuries of Christian history with manifold opportunities to introduce themselves to the Greek texts of the Apostolic Fathers with relative ease. Bergren's edition of a single text is much to be welcomed because of its light weight, easy reading, and affordable price. This reviewer would welcome other single-volume editions on, for example, 2 Clement, the letters of Ignatius, or the writings related to Polycarp from Bergren, the Catholic University of America Press, or preferably both. In any case, this is certainly an exciting time to be engaged in study of the Apostolic Fathers. Bergren's volume on 1 Clement is a helpful and important addition to the resources available for such study.

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Redmond, Eric C. ed. *Say It!: Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*. Chicago: Moody, 2020, 240 pages, $14.99, paperback.

What does the Great Migration have to do with exposition? Much! The Black Church in the United States has a beautiful yet painful history. The African American preaching tradition arose in this context, producing notable preachers including John Jasper, Richard Allen, Francis J. Grimké, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gardner C. Taylor, James Earl Massey, and E. K. Bailey. Historically, African American preaching has been underresearched and underpublished. However, times are changing, and homiletical treasures are being unearthed and offered to Christ's people. Eric C. Redmond (Ph.D., Capital Seminary and Graduate School) has assembled a top-notch lineup of African American homileticians in *Say It!* to "demonstrate the power of exposition in the cradle of the black pulpit" (back cover). Redmond is a Professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute and an Associate Pastor of Preaching, Teaching, and Care at Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, IL. He has published several books and articles, including *Where Are All the Brothers? Straight Answers to Men's Questions About the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008) and *Christ-Centered Exposition: Jonah* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016).

In the preface, Charlie E. Dates gives a taste of the riches of studying black preaching. Dates says, "One can learn much from a tradition of preaching that emerged from the transatlantic diaspora, is baptized in suffering, is sophisticated in rhetorical harmony, and yet proclaims salvation to the land of its own captivity" (p. 14). Dates

suggests the African American hermeneutic and homiletic will assist preachers in a country that has witnessed Christianity move from the center to the margins.

In the introduction, Redmond shows embracing the African American preaching tradition does not diminish one's ability to offer expositional preaching. Redmond believes there has been a misunderstanding—some have wrongly thought expositional preaching was the property of one culture. For example, a notable change can take place when a young African American is called to preach and enters an evangelical Bible college or seminary for training: "The people who have sent this young preacher to school no longer identify with the preacher's sermon content" (p. 22). At times the young preacher develops "a growing disdain for what he believes is 'the simplistic, unsophisticated' preaching of the black church" (p. 23). Is it possible to preach expositionally and embrace one's ethnic culture and preaching tradition?

A significant homiletical question arises: Is expository preaching a matter of form or content? After surveying definitions of exposition from Bryan Chapell, Albert Mohler, and Haddon Robinson, Redmond asserts, "Expository preaching concerns only the *content* of a message with respect to the words of Scripture and its accurate delivery" (p. 26). Since there is no requirement for a specific style of expression, the preacher is released from any burden to communicate the message in a particular style.

The rest of the book divides into four sections. Part 1 discusses the hermeneutics of African American preaching. In chapter 1, Winfred Neely shows the African American experience has molded preachers in this tradition to be sensitive to some biblical themes the evangelical world neglects. In chapters 2 and 3, Redmond and Ernest Gray show that though some are more difficult than others, all of the books of the OT and NT "are readily accessible and relevant for one to preach" (p. 57). Part 2 gives five sermons from each of the four major sections of the OT—the Pentateuch (George Parks, Jr.), Historical Books (Redmond), Poetical Books (Eric Mason), and Prophetic Books (Terry D. Streeter and Dates). Part 3 gives three sermons from three divisions of the NT—the Gospels and Acts (Romell Williams), the Epistles (Paul Felix), and Revelation (K. Edward Copeland). Finally, Redmond argues for *lectio continua* preaching in part 4. He asserts, "The best way to give our people the wealth of the truth of Christ for all aspects of their lives is to preach through full books of the Bible as the majority of the regular diet of our preaching" (218).

This book is commendable for at least three reasons. First, the authors demonstrate the African American preaching tradition and exposition go together more than some have assumed. The Black Church is not monolithic, and not all her ministers are considered expositors. Nevertheless, many of her ministers are excellent expositors. Students from all traditions will glean much from these expositors of the African American tradition. Readers will see how these preachers communicate the passage's meaning and apply the ancient text to their listeners' current, contextual realities.

Second, the chapters Redmond contributed to this volume were clear and practical. In the introduction, Redmond makes a clear case for the wedding of the African American preaching tradition and exposition while highlighting the dual emphases of justice and hope. In chapter 2, "A Ladder, A Mediator, and an Ark: The Challenge of Old Testament Exposition," he shows preachers have nothing to fear when they preach from the OT. Students will find his hermeneutical discussion of genre and his exegetical insights of Genesis 28:10–22, Exodus 2:11–24, and Psalm 24 accessible and applicable. In chapter 5, Redmond gives a solid example of a sermon from an OT Historical Book, Joshua 14:6–15, and his pastoral insights at the end of the chapter are beneficial to preachers. Finally, in chapter 12, Redmond makes a convincing case for preaching through books of the Bible as the best way for preachers to model sound hermeneutical principles and give their congregations Christ from all the Scriptures.

Third, readers will find the sermon examples one of the book's biggest strengths. Good preaching is both caught and taught. These sermons illustrate sound exposition in print form and will be helpful as examples to aspiring preachers. Doubtless, readers will miss out on the special delivery of these sermons, though, thankfully, internet technology allows for listening to sermons from these expositors. Each manuscript has an introduction and conclusion, which will prove particularly useful to aspiring preachers. Here, the preacher gives the context of preaching and homiletical insights.

There are a couple of areas readers should note. First, while the sermon examples were helpful, not every sermon given was a Christ-centered exposition. Due to hermeneutical and homiletical convictions, some preachers have different views about whether and how to preach Christ from the OT. Here, not every brother felt compelled to mention Jesus from an OT text or explain the gospel with clarity, which seemed out of step with Redmond's Christ-centered advocacy (pgs. 217–218).

Second, readers should think through the definition, purpose, and method of expository preaching. What happens—or should!—when a preacher stands up with a Bible in front of a congregation? There is much to praise God for with the recent resurgence in expository preaching. The sermons of many professing expositors, however, reveal there is little consensus about what expository preaching means. Redmond's definition of exposition, like Haddon Robinson's, defines exposition more broadly than others. He places a greater emphasis on contextualization and speaking to the contemporary issues of the congregation. While some homileticians may define exposition more narrowly than Redmond and the sermons illustrate, this book will provoke constructive questions: How much should the text's structure shape the sermon? What is the part of the preacher in advocating for social change? What is the Spirit's role in exposition?

The body of Christ is beautiful in its diversity. While various traditions have different strengths and weaknesses, this book demonstrates this tradition has much to offer biblical and theological students and pastors. Here, readers engage with

hermeneutics, exegesis, and application principles and see examples from the African American preaching tradition. After completing this book, readers may want greater exposure to this homiletical heritage. If so, they can join a bus tour through the history of the tradition in *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* by Frank A. Thomas (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2016). Indeed, Students and pastors of any part of Christ's body should read this book to learn how to *Say It!* well.

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Mathewson, Steven D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. Second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021, 252 pages, $22.99, paperback.

Steven Mathewson is both a pastor and a scholar. He serves as the senior pastor in Libertyville, IL, and he is also the director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Western Seminary in Portland, OR. Mathewson's background as a practitioner and scholar in the field of homiletics enhances his book, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, by allowing him to provide practical counsel and helpful instruction to readers.

The author develops his work around three parts. In Part One, Mathewson addresses some challenges with preaching from Old Testament narratives, and he surveys "The Christ-Centered Preaching Debate" (pp. 15-26). In relation to the subject of Christ-centered preaching, the author notes that "I did not deal with this sufficiently (in fact, hardly at all) in his first edition" (xviii). Mathewson's rationale for adding this discussion is as follows: "Your conclusions [about preaching Christ in the Old Testament] will shape the way that you study and preach an Old Testament narrative text" (p.15).

In Part Two, Mathewson presents his methodology for studying biblical narratives for preaching in six chapters. The first chapter addresses key aspects of sermon preparation such as text selection (pp. 29-32), exegesis (pp. 32-39) and prayer (pp. 39-40). Beginning with the second chapter in Part Two, the author works systematically through his exegetical methodology for preaching Old Testament narratives, and he employs the acronym "ACTS" (p. 41) to describe its main components. The "A" in "ACTS" stands for "Action" and corresponds to the literary feature of plot in biblical narratives (p. 41). This discussion culminates in the practical benefit of developing an exegetical outline for preaching a biblical narrative. The next chapter explains that the "C" in the acronym "ACTS" stands for "characters" (p. 65). The fourth chapter in Part Two discusses the "T" in the word "ACTS" which is the initial for the word "talking" (p. 75). While readers may assume that Mathewson focuses on the words or speeches of characters in this chapter, the author actually uses the word "talking" in a broader sense to "focus on the statements or speeches made by characters – as

well as editorial insights shared by the narrator" (p. 75). In the fifth chapter of this section of the book, the "S" in the word "ACTS" comes into view, and it stands for "setting" (p. 81). Again, the word "setting" is used in a rather broad sense to cover ideas such as "Historical-Cultural Setting" (pp. 82-83) and "Literary Setting" (pp. 83-85). Part Two of the book concludes with practical pointers on how to summarize key information gleaned from the application of the "ACTS" methodology (pp. 87-90), and it also includes a homiletical discussion on how to formulate a "Big Idea" from a biblical narrative (pp. 90-96).

Part Three of *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* focuses on homiletics in terms of building upon the exegetical foundation and literary analysis discussed in Part Two. The first chapter in this closing section of the book addresses the topics of connecting the focal narrative to the overarching storyline of Scripture (pp. 108-111) as well as "Explanation" (pp. 111-112), "Validation" (pp. 112-113), and "Application" (pp. 113-119). The second chapter in Part Three returns to the homiletical subject of the "Big Idea" (pp. 121-124) mentioned earlier in the book as well as briefly discusses the purpose of the sermon (pp. 125-126). The third chapter in this section proposes different types of movement which may be used in developing a sermon on biblical narratives. The major options discussed are "Inductive Preaching" (pp. 128-133), "The Flashback Approach" (p. 133), "The Inductive-Deductive Approach" (133-134), "The Semi-inductive Approach" (p. 134), and "First-Person Narratives" (134-136). The final four chapters in Part Three offer homiletical counsel on topics like developing a sermon outline (pp. 137-135), developing a sermon manuscript (pp. 165-163), developing an introduction and conclusion (pp. 165-170), and delivering a sermon (pp. 171-177), respectively.

In addition to a helpful bibliography, Scripture index, and subject index, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* includes three appendices which further enhance its benefits. Appendix A features a sample sermon manuscript on Judges 17-18. This sample sermon is intended to illustrate the methodology for preaching biblical narratives discussed throughout the book, and after the sample sermon, Mathewson provides some analysis of his sample sermon as well as an outline for the sermon manuscript. It should be noted that while the second edition only includes one sample sermon in contrast to the first edition which included five sample sermons (p. xviii), the author directs readers to other publications where more sample sermons can be found (p. 179). Appendix B focuses on applying the exegetical methodology in the book to the Hebrew text more directly. This discussion should be helpful for readers with a proficiency with the Hebrew language. Lastly, Appendix C offers readers guidance on commentaries on select biblical books.

Both practitioners and scholars should find *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* helpful. The layout of the book provides a guide for preachers to develop sermons based on biblical narratives in terms of how their sermons align with the biblical content and flow of Old Testament narratives. Of course, the exegetical

and homiletical principles discussed in the book are also transferrable to preaching narrative texts in the New Testament.

In terms of challenges with the resource, they are few in number, but three are worth mentioning. To begin, the chapter added to the second edition entitled "The Christ-Centered Preaching Debate" (pp. 15-26) is an important addition. However, it is more of a historical survey of the debate. Readers who are unfamiliar with the nuances, arguments, and approaches in this debate will need to make additional effort to read the homileticians referenced in this chapter in order to arrive at a more robust understanding of the hermeneutical and homiletical issues involved in this discussion. Second, some of the homiletical topics mentioned in the book assume some prior knowledge. For example, while the subject of "Big Idea" preaching surfaces in more than one place in the book, the discussions of this homiletical concept are brief. Readers would be well served to follow the author's footnotes in these sections of the book to read more extensively on these topics. This general idea would also apply to other aspects of the resource related to the various functional elements of preaching like explanation, illustration, and application, for instance. Lastly, while the survey of commentaries in the final appendix is helpful, it is nevertheless truncated. For instance, this appendix only covers the Pentateuch and the historical books. It does not provide guidance for other biblical books which also include narrative sections such the books of Jeremiah, Hosea, and Jonah. While these are prophetic books, they nevertheless include narrative aspects, and offering some hermeneutical and homiletical guidance for prophetic narratives would be helpful.

Even with these challenges, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* is a solid resource for all readers who are interested in developing sermons based on biblical narratives. The overall methodology presented in the book along with its helpful appendices and bibliography will provide practitioners and scholars with guidance for a sustained and meaningful journey in learning to preach Old Testament narratives well.

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Campbell, Charles L. *The Scandal of the Gospel: Preaching and the Grotesque*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2021, pp. 120, $33, paperback.

Painters have their colors and canvas, sculptors have their clay, and preachers have their words. And words are powerful. As the Bible so often indicates, Scripture has the power to build up and to tear down, and this is especially so in the ministry of preaching, as Charles L. Campbell discusses in his latest book, *The Scandal of the Gospel: Preaching and the Grotesque.* Campbell is James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor Emeritus of Homiletics at Duke Divinity School. He is a past president of

the Academy of Homiletics, a highly sought-after lecturer, and he is well published in the field. Most of the content for this latest book comes from his 2018 Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School; only the fourth chapter contains new material.

In the forward, Campbell explains that he is not seeking any consistency or system; rather, he says that he is "simply trying to make some homiletical connections between preaching and the grotesque" (p. xiv). This concept of the grotesque subsequently stands at the center of the book. The term is borrowed from the world of visual art, where it originally referred to paintings found in ancient Roman grottos, i.e. grotto-esque. These "murals presented unsettling, disorienting hybrids that transgressed accepted categories. They distorted what was considered 'normal' or 'beautiful.' They messed with accepted patterns. They were, as they came to be called, 'grotesque'" (p. 6). This description encapsulates the homiletical vision that Campbell sets forth in these chapters, i.e. preaching that is unsettling, disorienting, that transgresses accepted categories and norms, that is "grotesque."

In the first chapter Campbell considers how this concept of the grotesque fits with the scandal of the Gospel. Taking his cue from 1 Corinthians 1:23, he explains that the Gospel confronts with the destabilizing pairings of opposites: God-cross, life-death, repulsion-fascination, horror-hope. A God that is violently crucified on a cruel Roman cross is inherently "grotesque." In chapter 2, Campbell explores how the grotesque is often weaponized in the act of preaching. Specifically, when one compares sociological and/or theological opponents with non-human objects, one is using the grotesque to dehumanize and minimize them in order to maintain one's own particular understanding of order. In chapter 3, Campbell offers an alternative to this kind of weaponization by explaining how the grotesque creates preaching that is "open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing" (p. 55). Preaching that is grotesque welcomes input and insights from a variety of voices, and not merely biblical and theological ones. It is preaching that "becomes real when truth happens among the cacophony and incongruities of diverse voices and diverse lives" (p. 57). Finally, in chapter 4, Campbell imagines how the grotesque could be employed in preaching to address the environmental crisis.

Campbell's application of the grotesque to the discipline of preaching is provocative to say the least because it stands in such stark contrast to the kind of preaching that is the focus of Campbell's critiques. Sermons that offer simplistic principles for improving marriage, managing finances, or raising godly children attempt to "give people a nice focused nugget to carry home - not the shocking unresolved contradictions of the grotesque gospel" (p.11). This kind of preaching is neat, clean, even idealistic. The problem, however, is that "when we rush to order, when we avoid the interval of the grotesque, our preaching may become shallow, unreal, cliched. We don't go deep enough. We're not honest enough. And we end up falsifying both the gospel and life itself - we end up imposing false patterns" (p. 12). Life is so often the opposite of the neat and clean categories we attempt to impose on

it from the pulpit. It is complex and messy; it is "grotesque." Campbell would have readers embrace these tensions rather than attempting to resolve them.

Though he rightly critiques this "humanistic" (his label) approach to preaching, the alternative that he proposes is inherently more so. Grotesque preaching is "shaped by the dynamic and open life of Jesus' grotesque body. Grotesque preaching calls the church to be open to the world and calls the pulpit to be open to different bodies and new voices" (p. 56). It springs forth from the lived experiences of people rather than from the authoritative Word of God. What is glaringly absent from Campbell's vision for preaching is how it relates to the principle of "Thus saith the Lord." Christian preaching springs forth from the fact that God has spoken. The Apostle Paul instructed his protege Timothy to "Preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4.2). God has spoken; therefore, we speak. In other words, the purpose of Christian preaching is to exposit the declared Word, "giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read" (Nehemiah 8.8). It is not merely to listen to people's stories or to appreciate the diversities and complexities of the human experience.

In the final analysis, Campbell's invitation for preachers to approach the complexities, difficulties, and tensions of life with greater compassion is a welcomed alternative to the idealistic naivete that characterizes most preaching today. That being said, his alternative is essentially void of the very resources that God has provided to address those complexities and difficulties. In other words, grotesque preaching, as Campbell envisions it, comes off merely as a way to exalt and platform human experiences over the Word of God. However, it is ultimately powerless as a homiletical method for proclaiming the inspired Word of the one true and living God. In my view, preachers would be better served by attending to the text of Holy Scripture, giving its meaning through systematic exposition, than by any clever attempts to be "grotesque."

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