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Theology, Culture & History

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

To provide an inter-tradition forum for scholars who affirm the historic Ecumenical Creeds of Christendom to constructively communicate contemporary theologies, developments, ideas, commentaries, and insights pertaining to theology, culture, and history toward reforming and elevating Western Christianity. ATI seeks a *critical* function as much or more so as a quasi-ecumenical one. The purpose is not to erase or weaken the distinctives of the various ecclesial traditions, but to widen the dialogue and increase inter-tradition understanding while mutually affirming Christ's power to transform culture and the importance of strengthening Western Christianity with special reference to Her historic roots.

ABOUT

American Theological Inquiry (ATI) was formed in 2007 by Drs. Gannon Murphy (PhD, St. David's College, Univ. Wales, Theology; Presbyterian/Reformed) and Stephen Patrick (PhD, Univ. Illinois, Philosophy; Eastern Orthodox) to open up space for diverse Christian academicians, who affirm the Ecumenical Creeds, to contribute research throughout the broader Christian scholarly community in America and the West broadly.

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- Ecumenism and/or criticism of other traditions within the scope of orthodoxy (creedal Christianity).
- Engaging contemporary culture with the gospel.

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2. The work has not been submitted elsewhere, or, permissory documentation is provided by the previous publisher indicating approval for publication in ATI.

5. Submit MSS or book reviews in a Microsoft Word, RTF, or text format.

Volume 1, No. 2., July 15, 2008

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AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

July 15, 2008
Volume 1, No. 2.

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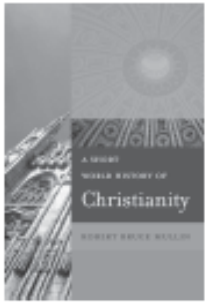

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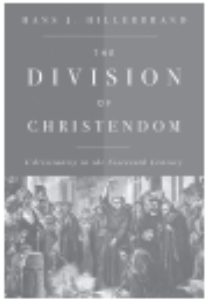

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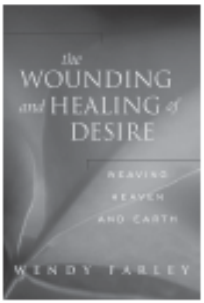

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THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

D. Stephen Long

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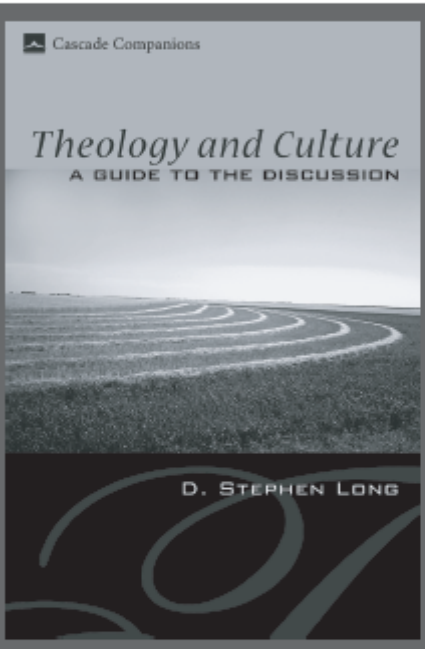

How can we speak about God without assuming that God is nothing but our own speaking, nothing but our culture's effort to name what cannot be named? How can we deny that our speaking of God is always culturally located? To answer these questions, we need to pay close attention to what we mean by *culture*, and how we use this very complex term both in our everyday language and especially in the language of faith. *Culture* is an exceedingly complex term that nearly everyone uses, but no one is sure what it means. This work examines various uses of the term *culture* in theology today.

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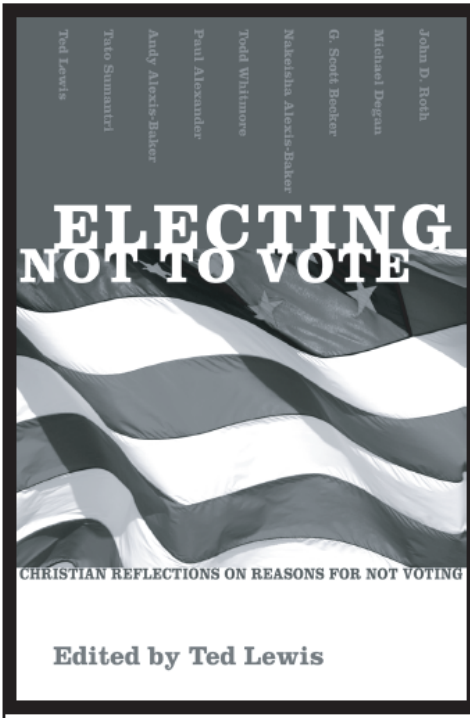

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ELECTING NOT TO VOTE

Christian Reflections on Reasons for Not Voting

Edited by Ted Lewis

ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-227-0 | 140 pp. | $17

ETHICAL DISCOURSE ABOUT VOTING RARELY, IF EVER, INCLUDES THE OPTION of abstaining for principled reasons. This collection of articles widens the discussion in that direction by asking a new question: on what grounds might one not vote as an act of conscience? Representing a variety of Christian traditions, the contributors explore issues of political identity and citizenship in light of biblical and ecclesial concerns. This volume creates a new freedom for readers within any faith tradition to enter into a dialogue that has not yet been welcome in North America.

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—**GREG BOYD**, author of *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (2006)

FROM THE EDITOR[1]

Each of us on staff at American Theological Inquiry (ATI) were delighted beyond measure by the positive feedback we received following our inaugural issue of January 15, 2008 (Vol. 1, No. 1). As we embark on this second issue, I am reminded once again of ATI's heartfelt desire to provide an inter-tradition forum for scholars who affirm the historic Ecumenical Creeds to contribute their researches, insights, and exhortations with a watchful eye toward reforming and elevating Western (esp. American) Christianity.

The great spiritual Fathers of the East long advocated a fully lived-out triad of *praxis*, *theoria*, and *nepsis*, broadly, "action," "vision," and "vigilance" (or "watchfulness"). We do not want to simply shuffle academic papers about, adding more and more erudite, albeit lifeless, bricks of text into a high scholarly edifice that functions little beyond provisioning academicians with mental puzzles and idle theories to fiddle about with while we seek out higher stations in the world. I'm reminded of a lecture I once attended concerning the pre-Socratics during which the lecturer conjectured that perhaps the true motive behind Zeno of Elea's paradoxes weren't so much to devise some better form of new dialectic, but perhaps to deploy rhetorical tools to silence those whom he disliked, or just to annoy his friends. "Novel" theology can do this. And yet Chesterton suggested, rightly I think, that orthodoxy is the *perpetual novelty*—the *right* sort of novelty. Newer and newer ideas aren't actually novel at all. They're wearisome, empty, and fleeting. Academia these days often seems to me like one giant vacuole hitched on the slithering bodies of learned amoebas, sucking in what might otherwise have been nutritive, but then spewing it out again by the same mechanism into new and increasingly demented forms.

But the perpetual novelty of orthodoxy will forever remain truly novel, qua novel, *novus*, precisely because of its mettlesome perpendicularity to the ever-present drift of cultural and academic trends which become tired and week very soon after they are new. This is not to shun the *new* just for being so. But it does mean that looking *forward*, while abiding by a triad of *praxis*, *theoria*, and *nepsis*, often means looking *back*. It is the proleptic Christian Hope which must be our focus. And that focus must ever be actionable, visionary, and watchful. Providing a philosophic critique of the contemporary cultural milieu, or of the growing tide of secularist (even pagan) thinking with its attendant (and, now, often militant) philosophical materialism can only go so far. We must also be able to *integrate* the timeless insights of our shared faith into our daily lives such that we will navigate with confidence through the increasingly stormy cultural sea in which we live and, in turn, be equipped to minister to others whether spiritually, intellectually, or physically. It begins with *us*—to which we might undergird our triad with a quadrate of wisdom, integrity, humility, and truth.

Instead of synopsizing each of the articles that follow in this second issue of ATI, it will suffice here to say that each author has contributed something unique to our growing understanding of the historic faith and to our mutual aim of *fides quaerens intellectum*. In addition to their own insights, drawn from tradition, each author also draws upon the rays of light that have beamed from some of the finest thinkers God has condescended to bless us

[1] Gannon Murphy, PhD, is General Editor of *American Theological Inquiry* and the author of *Hope for the Thinker in an Unthinking World* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, forthcoming).

with as we continue on our journey. These thinkers hail from both past and present and from around the world, and—though they're certainly not the only sources of great wisdom—they form here a unified phalanx of shining lights making clearer our paths toward the triadic paradigm, with Hope as its center and *telos*. Subsumed along this path is an eye toward better understand ourselves, our world, and the purpose for which we were created—to know and love God, to glorify Him, to celebrate His overflowing blessings with gladness (however easily this is missed amidst this ever-increasing morass of cultural kitsch and sordid gimcrack, ready-packaged for public consumption—and all such shiny, pretty boxes). As Kierkegaard might say, *Fie on that*! There is *Hope* to be had. It is not the easy road. But it is the only one that provides a room with an exit, and an *Infinite* one.

Popular consensus seems to agree that we are now a culture of image, images, imagery; persons, personality, and personalities (I admit there is also a terrible problem with the overuse of alliteration—*mea culpa*—with the *apologia pro vita sua* that it is also probably the least of our problems). At any rate, I must admit that I take some respite, indeed consolation, in the fact that ATI's contributors have made almost precisely zero effort to accommodate and kowtow to this trend, one which continues to progressively sap the powers and wonders of the human imagination in America and the West like a dark, creeping fungus. Perhaps the best advice for reading this second issue of ATI comes from Blake:

> This life's five windows of the soul
> Distorts the Heavens from pole to pole,
> And leads you to believe a lie
> When you *see with, not thro', the eye*
> That was born in a night, to perish in a night,
> When the soul slept in the beams of light[2]

Those imbued with that rare, Divine nisus to "see with, not thro', the eye" are those that see a tender shoot squarely in the midst of their path hooked to a fragile twofold root. One is the root of *despair*, the other of *Hope*. We must decide which to prune and which to tend. The shoot is easily bruised, but someday will bear fruit. And precisely what fruit will we hand to others as our bodies and minds become tired and greyer with each passing day? (Mt 7:17-20).

[2] *The Everlasting Gospel* (1810), Lines 172-177. Nicholson, D. H. S., and Lee, A. H. E., eds. *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1917); Bartleby.com, 2000. http://www.bartleby.com/236/58 [May 13, 2008]. Emphasis added.

PATRISTIC READING

THE *CONFERENCES*, FIRST CONFERENCE

St. John Cassian[1]

Chapter XVI

A question on the changing character of the thoughts.

GERMANUS. How is it then, that even against our will, aye and without our knowledge idle thoughts steal upon us so subtly and secretly that it is fearfully hard not merely to drive them away, but even to grasp and seize them? Can then a mind sometimes be found free from them, and never attacked by illusions of this kind?

Chapter XVII

The answer what the mind can and what it cannot do with regard to the state of its thoughts.

MOSES. It is impossible for the mind not to be approached by thoughts, but it is in the power of every earnest man either to admit them or to reject them. As then their rising up does not entirely depend on ourselves, so the rejection or admission of them lies in our own power. But because we said that it is impossible for the mind not to be approached by thoughts, you must not lay everything to the charge of the assault, or to those spirits who strive to instill them into us, else there would not remain any free will in man, nor would efforts for our improvement be in our power: but it is, I say, to a great extent in our power to improve the character of our thoughts and to let either holy and spiritual thoughts or earthly ones grow up in our hearts. For this purpose frequent reading and continual meditation on the Scriptures is employed that from thence an opportunity for spiritual recollection may be given to us, therefore the frequent singing of Psalms is used, that thence constant feelings of compunction may be provided, and earnest vigils and fasts and prayers, that the mind may be brought low and not mind earthly things, but contemplate things celestial, for if these things are dropped and carelessness creeps on us, the mind being hardened with the foulness of sin is sure to incline in a carnal direction and fall away.

Chapter XVIII

Comparison of a soul and a millstone.

AND this movement of the heart is not unsuitably illustrated by the comparison of a mill wheel, which the headlong rush of water whirls round, with revolving impetus, and which can never stop its work so long as it is driven round by the action of the water: but it is in the power of the man who directs it, to decide whether he will have wheat or barley or darnel ground by it. That certainly must be crushed by it which is put into it by the man who has charge of that business. So then the mind also through the trials of the present life is driven about by the torrents of temptations pouring in upon it from all sides, and cannot be

[1] St. John Cassian (360–435), an Eastern monk and theologian, was largely responsible for bringing Eastern spirituality to the West, while also influencing the spread of monasticism. His *Conferences* are generally a record of his experiences with abbots and ascetics throughout Egypt.

free from the flow of thoughts: but the character of the thoughts which it should either throw off or admit for itself, it will provide by the efforts of its own earnestness and diligence: for if, as we said, we constantly recur to meditation on the Holy Scriptures and raise our memory towards the recollection of spiritual things and the desire of perfection and the hope of future bliss, spiritual thoughts are sure to rise from this, and cause the mind to dwell on those things on which we have been meditating. But if we are overcome by sloth or carelessness and spend our time in idle gossip, or are entangled in the cares of this world and unnecessary anxieties, the result will be that a sort of species of tares will spring up, and afford an injurious occupation for our hearts, and as our Lord and Savior says, wherever the treasure of our works or purpose may be, there also our heart is sure to continue.

Chapter XIX

Of the three origins of our thoughts.

ABOVE all we ought at least to know that there are three origins of our thoughts, i.e., from God, from the devil, and from ourselves. They come from God when He vouchsafes to visit us with the illumination of the Holy Ghost, lifting us up to a higher state of progress, and where we have made but little progress, or through acting slothfully have been overcome, He chastens us with most salutary compunction, or when He discloses to us heavenly mysteries, or turns our purpose and will to better actions, as in the case where the king Ahasuerus, being chastened by the Lord, was prompted to ask for the books of the annals, by which he was reminded of the good deeds of Mordecai, and promoted him to a position of the highest honor and at once recalled his most cruel sentence concerning the slaughter of the Jews. Or when the prophet says: "I will hearken what the Lord God will say in me." Another too tells us "And an angel spoke, and said in me," or when the Son of God promised that He would come with His Father, and make His abode in us, and "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." And the chosen vessel: "Ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." But a whole range of thoughts springs from the devil, when he endeavors to destroy us either by the pleasures of sin or by secret attacks, in his crafty wiles deceitfully showing us evil as good, and transforming himself into an angel of light to us: as when the evangelist tells us: "And when supper was ended, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray" the Lord: and again also "after the sop," he says, "Satan entered into him." Peter also says to Ananias: "Why hath Satan tempted thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?" And that which we read in the gospel much earlier as predicted by Ecclesiastes: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place." That too which is said to God against Ahab in the third book of Kings, in the character of an unclean spirit: "I will go forth and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." But they arise from ourselves, when in the course of nature we recollect what we are doing or have done or have heard. Of which the blessed David speaks: "I thought upon the ancient days, and had in mind the years from of old, and I meditated, by night I exercised myself with my heart, and searched out my spirit." And again: "the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vain:" and "the thoughts of the righteous are judgments." In the gospel too the Lord says to the Pharisees: "why do ye think evil in your hearts?"

Chapter XX

About discerning the thoughts, with an illustration from a good money-changer.

WE ought then carefully to notice this threefold order, and with a wise discretion to analyze the thoughts which arise in our hearts, tracking out their origin and cause and author in the first instance, that we may be able to consider how we ought to yield ourselves to them in accordance with the desert of those who suggest them so that we may, as the Lord's command bids us, become good money-changers, whose highest skill and whose training is to test what is perfectly pure gold and what is commonly termed *tested*, or what is not sufficiently purified in the fire; and also with unerring skill not to be taken in by a common brass denarius, if by being colored with bright gold it is made like some coin of great value; and not only shrewdly to recognize coins stamped with the heads of usurpers, but with a still shrewder skill to detect those which have the image of the right king, but are not properly made, and lastly to be careful by the test of the balance to see that they are not under proper weight. All of which things the gospel saying, which uses this figure, shows us that we ought also to observe spiritually; first that whatever has found an entrance into our hearts, and whatever doctrine has been received by us, should be most carefully examined to see whether it has been purified by the divine and heavenly fire of the Holy Ghost, or whether it belongs to Jewish superstition, or whether it comes from the pride of a worldly philosophy and only externally makes a show of religion. And this we can do, if we carry out the Apostle's advice, "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God." But by this kind those men also are deceived, who after having been professed as monks are enticed by the grace of style, and certain doctrines of philosophers, which at the first blush, owing to some pious meanings not out of harmony with religion, deceive as with the glitter of gold their hearers, whom they have superficially attracted, but render them poor and miserable for ever, like men deceived by false money made of copper: either bringing them back to the bustle of this world, or enticing them into the errors of heretics, and bombastic conceits: a thing which we read of as happening to Achan in the book of Joshua the son of Nun, when he coveted a golden weight from the camp of the Philistines, and stole it, and was smitten with a curse and condemned to eternal death. In the second place we should be careful to see that no wrong interpretation fixed on to the pure gold of Scripture deceives us as to the value of the metal: by which means the devil in his craft tried to impose upon our Lord and Savior as if He was a mere man, when by his malevolent interpretation he perverted what ought to be understood generally of all good men, and tried to fasten it specially on to Him, who had no need of the care of the angels: saying, "For He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" by a skilful assumption on his part giving a turn to the precious sayings of Scripture and twisting them into a dangerous sense, the very opposite of their true meaning, so as to offer to us the image and face of an usurper under cover of the gold color which may deceive us. Or whether he tries to cheat us with counterfeits, for instance by urging that some work of piety should be taken up which as it does come from the true minds of the fathers, leads under the form of virtue to vice; and, deceiving us either by immoderate or impossible fasts, or by too long vigils, or inordinate prayers, or unsuitable reading, brings us to a bad end. Or, when he persuades us to give ourselves up to mixing in the affairs of others, and to pious visits, by which he may drive us away from the spiritual cloisters of the monastery, and the secrecy of its friendly peacefulness, and suggests that we take on our shoulders the anxieties and cares of religious women who are in want, that when a monk is inextricably entangled in snares of this sort he may distract him with most injurious occupations and cares. Or else when he

incites a man to desire the holy office of the clergy under the pretext of edifying many people, and the love of spiritual gain, by which to draw us away from the humility and strictness of our life. All of which things, although they are opposed to our salvation and to our profession, yet when covered with a sort of veil of compassion and religion, easily deceive those who are lacking in skill and care. For they imitate the coins of the true king, because they seem at first full of piety, but are not stamped by those who have the right to coin, i.e., the approved Catholic fathers, nor do they proceed from the head public office for receiving them, but are made by stealth and by the fraud of the devil, and palmed off upon the unskillful and ignorant not without serious harm. And even although they seem to be useful and needful at first, yet if afterwards they begin to interfere with the soundness of our profession, and as it were to weaken in some sense the whole body of our purpose, it is well that they should be cut off and cast away from us like a member which may be necessary, but yet offends us and which seems to perform the office of the right hand or foot. For it is better, without one member of a command, i.e., its working or result, to continue safe and sound in other parts, and to enter as weak into the kingdom of heaven rather than with the whole mass of commands to fall into some error which by an evil custom separates us from our strict rule and the system purposed and entered upon, and leads to such loss, that it will never outweigh the harm that will follow, but will cause all our past fruits and the whole body of our work to be burnt in hell fire. Of which kind of illusions it is well said in the Proverbs: "There are ways which seem to be right to a man, but their latter end will come into the depths of hell," and again "An evil man is harmful when he attaches himself to a good man," i.e., the devil deceives when he is covered with an appearance of sanctity: "but he hates the sound of the watchman," i.e., the power of discretion which comes from the words and warnings of the fathers.

Chapter XXI

Of the illusion of Abbot John.

IN this manner we have heard that Abbot John who lived at Lycon, was recently deceived. For when his body was exhausted and failing as he had put off taking food during a fast of two days, on the third day while he was on his way to take some refreshment the devil came in the shape of a filthy Ethiopian, and falling at his feet, cried "Pardon me because I appointed this labor for you." And so that great man, who was so perfect in the matter of discretion, understood that under pretence of an abstinence practiced unsuitably, he was deceived by the craft of the devil, and engaged in a fast of such a character as to affect his worn out body with a weariness that was unnecessary, indeed that was harmful to the spirit; as he was deceived by a counterfeit coin, and, while he paid respect to the image of the true king upon it, was not sufficiently alive to the question whether it was rightly cut and stamped. But the last duty of this "good money-changer," which, as we mentioned before, concerns the examination of the weight, will be fulfilled, if whenever our thoughts suggest that anything is to be done, we scrupulously think it over, and, laying it in the scales of our breast, weigh it with the most exact balance, whether it be full of good for all, or heavy with the fear of God: or entire and sound in meaning; or whether it be light with human display or some conceit of novelty, or whether the pride of foolish vain glory has not diminished or lessened the weight of its merit. And so straightway weighing them in the public balance, i.e., testing them by the acts and proofs of the Apostles and Prophets let us hold them as it were

entire and perfect and of full weight, or else with all care and diligence reject them as imperfect and counterfeit, and of insufficient weight.

Chapter XXII

Of the fourfold method of discrimination.

THIS power of discriminating will then be necessary for us in the fourfold manner of which we have spoken; viz., first that the material does not escape our notice whether it be of true or of painted gold: secondly, that those thoughts which falsely promise works of religion should be rejected by us as forged and counterfeit coins, as they are those which are not rightly stamped, and which bear an untrue image of the king; and that we may be able in the same way to detect those which in the case of the precious gold of Scripture, by means of a false and heretical meaning, show the image not of the true king but of an usurper; and that we refuse those whose weight and value the rust of vanity has depreciated and not allowed to pass in the scales of the fathers, as coins that are too light, and are false and weigh too little; so that we may not incur that which we are warned by the Lord's command to avoid with all our power, and lose the value and reward of all our labor. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where rust and moth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." For whenever we do anything with a view to human glory we know that we are, as the Lord says, laying up for ourselves treasure on earth, and that consequently being as it were hidden in the ground and buried in the earth it must be destroyed by sundry demons or consumed by the biting rust of vain glory, or devoured by the moths of pride so as to contribute nothing to the use and profits of the man who has hidden it. We should then constantly search all the inner chambers of our hearts, and trace out the footsteps of whatever enters into them with the closest investigation lest haply some beast, if I may say so, relating to the understanding, either lion or dragon, passing through has furtively left the dangerous marks of his track, which will show to others the way of access into the secret recesses of the heart, owing to a carelessness about our thoughts. And so daily and hourly turning up the ground of our heart with the gospel plough, i.e., the constant recollection of the Lord's cross, we shall manage to stamp out or extirpate from our hearts the lairs of noxious beasts and the lurking places of poisonous serpents.

A TALE OF TWO DEITIES

Kelly James Clark[1]

"There is no common measure between mind and mind."

—John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent*

Introduction

It was the best of gods, it was the worst of gods. So one might describe the God of classical theism. Classical theism affirms the best of gods—a maximally perfect being that is omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, impassible, *a se*, simple, perfectly good, and eternal.[2] Classical theism is often associated with strong forms of divine sovereignty whereby God has complete control over all human and non-human events in the world; this typically entails a correspondingly less robust form of human freedom. God's aseity means that God does not depend on anything, yet, by virtue of divine sovereignty, everything depends upon God. An eternal God is outside of time and is correspondingly immutable. If God cannot change and is not affected by things, God cannot suffer upsetting, episodic emotions in response to human failings and suffering; God is impassible, God has no upsetting pathos (emotions). Divine omniscience, according to classical theism, includes exhaustive foreknowledge of future contingents (what free creatures will freely do in the future). Classical theism includes all of the divine attributes considered necessary for a maximally perfect being. But, so its critics claim, classical theism also affirms the worst of gods: the God of classical theism is distant, unmoved by human suffering, hyper-controlling (thusly diminishing human freedom), and unresponsive to prayer.

What classical theists see as necessary has been rejected by so-called "open theists" as too Greek. Open theists attribute classical theism more to the influence of Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists than to biblical revelation. A more natural reading of the Bible, open theists claim, suggests that Yahweh is not eternal, immutable, and impassible; God is omniscient but not as classical theism contends: God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future; God knows everything that can be known but future contingents cannot be known; therefore, God does not (cannot) know future contingents.[3]

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[1] Kelly James Clark, PhD, is Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College. He is author or coauthor of numerous books including, *101 Key Philosophical Terms and Their Importance for Theology* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), *When Faith Is Not Enough* (Eerdmans, 1997), and *Return to Reason* (Eerdmans, 1990).

[2] Contemporary protestant defenders of classical theism include the following: Bruce Ware, *God's Lesser Glory* (Crossway Books, 2000); Douglas Wilson et. al., editors, *Bound Only Once: The Failure of Open Theism* (Canon Press, 2001); John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (P & R Publishing, 2001); Gannon Murphy, *Consuming Glory: A Classical Defense of Divine-Human Relationality Against Open Theism* (Wipf & Stock, 2006); John Piper et al., *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Crossway Books, 2003); Millard J. Erickson, *What Does God Know and When Does He Know It?: The Current Controversy over Divine Foreknowledge* (Zondervan, 2006).

[3] God has natural knowledge of the future since, for example, the motions of the planets are perfectly predictable from their present position and natural laws. What God cannot know is what free

According the open theists, on the most natural reading of the Bible, Yahweh changes, does not know future contingents, cannot do certain things, and is dependent on creatures (for emotional states and will). God suffers with us, that is, upon the occasion of the suffering of his children (say upon hearing the cries of his people in bondage in Egypt).[4] And so, God does not exist in a perfect state of uninterrupted, suffering-free bliss. Open theism's strong emphasis on libertarian free will and belief that God does not know the future in so far as it concerns free choices, suggests a future open both to God and to human beings.[5] In addition, it suggests a divinity that is open to responding to prayer, to suffering in reaction to human hardships, and to working in partnership with humans to carve out an unforeseen but hoped for future.

If all of the attributes the classical theist ascribes to God are rejected, one may wonder, of course, about just what is left that is distinctly *divine* in the nature of God. This charge has been resoundingly leveled against open theism. John Piper, in his endorsement of a book that defends classical theism, writes with characteristic overstatement: "Open theism . . . dishonors God, distorts Scripture, damages faith, and would, if left unchecked, destroy churches and lives."[6] In a position paper for the Baptist General Convention, Paul Helseth writes: "For it seems that the God of Open Theism is little more than a cosmic sugar daddy whose affections are now hot and now cold, but never constant."[7] Tom Ascol writes:

> In many respects, Open Theism is a perfect theological fit for the contemporary American *zeitgeist*. In an age where empathy trumps truthfulness we are more comforted by someone who feels our pain than by someone who speaks honestly, unequivocally and consistently. Disappoint us if you will, fail to keep your promises if you must, but do not cease to reassure us that you really feel for us. The God of Open Theism perfectly fits this criterion.[8]

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creatures will freely do in the future.

[4] Representative open theist texts include: David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism* (InterVarsity Press, 1996); Clark Pinnock, et. al., editors, *The Openness of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1994); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks* (InterVarsity Press, 1998); William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Cornell University Press, 1998); Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Baker Books, 2000); Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Baker Academic, 2001); William Hasker, *Providence, Evil, and the Openness of God* (Routledge, 2004).

[5] See Pinnock: "Decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God. They are potential—yet to be realized but not yet actual. God can predict a great deal of what we will choose to do, but not all of it, because some of it remains hidden in the mystery of human freedom … The God of the Bible displays an openness to the future (i.e. ignorance of the future) that the traditional view of omniscience simply cannot accommodate" (Pinnock, "Augustine to Arminius, " 25-26).

[6] John Piper, Senior Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church, cover blurb of *God's Lesser Glory* by Bruce A. Ware.

[7] "Strange Providence: Pain, Suffering, and the Ambivalent God of Open Theism". http://www.bgc.bethel.edu/4know/strange.htm

[8] Tom Ascol, "Pastoral Implications of Open Theism," *Founders Journal*. Fall 2001. p. 9. Ascol's caricatures and false dichotomies are astonishing. Caricature and false dichotomy, though, are common rhetorical ploys in this discussion.

And R. C. Sproul claims that open theism is "an assault not merely on Calvinism, or even on classical theism, but on Christianity itself."[9] But suppose, for the sake of prudence and understanding, we set the hysteria aside and consider the issues more dispassionately. Is classical theism *normative* for Christians" Is open theism a sub-Christian threat to the church?

In this essay, I argue that both classical and open theism offer plausible accounts of the biblical data. However, I argue that neither has any special (conclusive or demonstrable) claim to being the best interpretation of Holy writ. I will consider the judgments that both open and classical theists make when interpreting the Bible. I will show some of the many extra-biblical assumptions that are required to make those judgments and the effect of making such assumptions on the probability of their interpretation. Finally, I will discuss the nature of believing a hypothesis (interpretation) on the basis of the evidence (Scripture), focusing on the consequences of the underdetermination of theory by data for biblical theology.

God and Probability

There are at least six broad approaches to understanding the biblical text[10]:

1. As God speaking.
2. As a record of what people of an ancient culture believed.[11]
3. As narrative.[12]
4. As a hermetic message to future alchemists.
5. As a series of coded numbers.
6. As the surface of a substructure which is the token of a type of one of the five or six recurring human myths.

Even if one were to opt for 1, one would still need to make hermeneutical decisions about whether or not God's speaking is intended as a depiction of the nature of God or as spiritual/pedagogical: how should people of faith live?[13] So at least two more judgments must be made:

7. God is speaking about God's nature.
8. God is speaking about how God's people should live.

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[9] R. C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy over Free Will* (Baker Books, 2002), p. 143.

[10] I intend these, by stipulation, to be independent. They need not be, of course, but if they are not, the probabilistic judgments we are assessing become vastly more complicated. So, to prevent messiness and to keep us on topic, we will take these approaches to be independent.

[11] I take this option to oppose the view that God speaks in scripture.

[12] I take narrative here as an entirely literary approach which is unconcerned about anything other than 'literary truth.'

[13] RaDaK, a 12th c. Jewish theologian (Rabbi David Kimchi, 1160—1235) claimed that all we learn from Abraham is the proper way to love God.

And supposing God intends to impart information about God's nature, is this information conveyed literally or metaphorically? Indeed, judgments must be made about how the Creator could possibly communicate information about Godself to God's creatures; how has God accommodated Godself to human cognitive limitations? And how does one tell if there has been accommodation or not? And, is it at all possible to reduce the anthropomorphic language about God to non-anthropomorphic truths about God?

Consider the statement attributed to God in the Hebrew scriptures: "I will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12). This passage could simply express the psychological need for redemption, the religious hope for forgiveness, or the author's faith that ultimate reality is for us. Suppose one believes that it is the very voice of God speaking.[14] God's prediction of forgetting could be an admission of a bad memory or even cosmic Alzheimer's (and so God is neither immutable and omniscient). Or, it could be that God is not speaking literally but metaphorically and that God really intends that God will not hold their sins against them. The relationship, once marred by sin, has been restored by divine forgiveness. The relational damage of disobedience has been undone. Or perhaps the metaphor points to God's voluntary renunciation of omniscience (and, hence, is not immutable) so that God can relate to God's repugnant creatures without loathing them. I have suggested a few interpretations of this passage which, although they involve God speaking, entail nothing about God's beliefs or nature. This passage, even if taken as God speaking about God's nature, would be true on any number of hypotheses about God's inner life:

1. God does (or does not) forget their sins.
2. God voluntarily renounces (or does not) access to the proposition that God's people have sinned thus and so,
3. God is (or is not) immutable.
4. God is (or is not) omniscient (in terms of exhaustive foreknowledge).

There are, of course, interpretations of this passage that involve God speaking but which speak of the faith-life of God's covenant people. For example, the passage could instruct God's people not to be weighed down by their past indiscretions but to move boldly forward in confident obedience to Yahweh.

Given the plethora of hypotheses that are consistent with the passage, it follows that the passage does not deductively entail any one hypothesis. Although proof-texting is often the name of the game for evangelical theologians, there is no easy access to God's nature based on the text. From what God does, one cannot read off (i.e., deduce) what God knows, feels, desires, etc. The point of this example is to demonstrate that the Bible does not wear its meaning on its sleeve. Theology cannot simply be read off from the Bible.[15] If theology is not deducible from Scripture, then it must be inductively derived from the relevant data. But

[14] This raises the perplexing issue of divine and human authorship. Supposing the Bible is divinely co-authored, how is the intent of God's speaking related to the intent of the human author/redactor? It may be that what God intends is quite different from what the human author/redactor intends.

[15] In spite of the obviousness of this claim, both classical and open theists accuse the other of avoiding the natural, obvious or honest reading of the text.

inductive generalizations involve decreasing degrees of certainty depending on the number and quality of the assumptions one makes.

Consider the classical theist who interprets the passage metaphorically, claiming that an omniscient being cannot forget anything but believes, nonetheless, that God will not hold their sins against them and will undo the relational damage of disobedience. This interpretation requires a host of takings. The Bible as a whole is taken first in this way, as God speaking, for example, and not in that way, as a deep human expression of psychological need. And, supposing it is God speaking, it is taken this way, as providing information about God's nature, for example, and not in that way, as pedagogical. And, supposing the Bible includes God speaking about God's nature, it is taken this way, as metaphorical, and not that way, as literally true of God. And, supposing the Bible includes God's speaking about God's nature in a metaphorical way, it is taken in a manner which preserves divine omniscience or in a way which rejects divine omniscience. The conditional nature of these judgments is clear in the way I've set out judgments of the classical theist on this passage. So the classical theist, using her hermeneutical commitments, takes the passage as anthropomorphic and rejects the idea that God forgets.

Yet the open theist, using his hermeneutical commitments, might contend that the passage is literally true: God forgot something that God once knew.[16] The evidential basis upon which each of these hermeneutical judgments is made is exactly the same. Indeed, the evidential basis for accepting or rejecting the passage as God speaking is exactly the same. The "linguistic marks" on the page constitute the primary evidential basis for making judgments about the meaning of the text.[17] This creates an evidential problem: as assumption is piled upon assumption, the likelihood of any given interpretation of Scripture, given that one's evidence base remains the same, decreases rather than increases.

Theology and Probability

We can make this argument more formal with an elementary excursion into the probability calculus. The intuitions involved in the judgments of likelihood are fairly straightforward. They involve the application of the multiplication axiom to theology. Consider a complete deck of cards. The probability of drawing the ace of spades in one pick is 1/52.[18] In cases of independent options, the likelihood of one or the other option is calculated by adding the probability of one option, given the evidence to the probability of the other option, given the evidence (this is the so-called "Addition Axiom" of the probability calculus). So the probability of drawing an ace *or* a two of spades given a

[16] I don't mean to suggest that this is how any open theist does indeed interpret this passage. I am only using it for illustrative purposes.

[17] The primary evidence, *linguistic marks*, is not nonsense on which human impose whatever order they like. And linguistic marks are signs that betoken some sort of belief-independent reality. The biblical linguistic marks are primarily Hebrew and Greek, so they require understanding of these ancient languages in their historic contexts for proper interpretation. There are, of course, other sources of evidence such as knowledge of ancient civilizations in general and the Hebrew culture in particular. But, for the evangelical, the primary evidence upon which most such judgments are made are the linguistic marks. That is, the authority in all matters of faith and practice is *sola scriptura*.

[18] I take all probabilities, for use in the probability calculus, as values between 0 and 1. So 50% is .5.

complete deck of cards is roughly 1/52 plus 1/52 or 1/26.[19] That is, one is twice as likely to draw an ace or two of spades than to draw an ace of spades. The probability of drawing an ace or two of spades from a complete deck of cards is greater than the probability of drawing an ace of spades. Let us generalize, taking E as one's body of evidence and A and B as independent options:

$$P(AvB/E) \geq P(A/E)$$

What's the probability of picking the ace *and* a two of spades in order given two draws? In this case, one must use the so-called "Multiplication Axiom." The probability of picking the ace of spades in two draws is (roughly) 2/52 and the probability of picking the two of spades in two draws is (roughly) 2/52.[20] How likely is it that one will pick *both* in two draws? It should be intuitively obvious that one is considerably less likely to pick both cards than one is to draw one or the other in two draws. Indeed the probability that one will pick the ace of spades or the two of spades is (roughly) 2/52 x 2/52 or 4/2704 or 1/676. That is, one is 26 times less likely to draw an ace and two of spades than to draw an ace of spades. The probability of drawing an ace and two of spades from a complete deck of cards is less than the probability of drawing an ace of spades. Let us generalize, taking E as one's body of evidence and A and B as independent options:

$$P(A\&B/E) \leq P(A/E)$$

Indeed, the P(A&B) are typically considerably less likely given E than A is given E. Suppose one wished to improve one's likelihood of drawing the ace and two of spades (say to win a large pot of money). The only way this can be done is to improve the evidence (E) in such a manner that, given the new evidence E (E_n), A&B are more likely than on the old E (E_o). Suppose, for example, we take:

E_o = regular deck of 52 cards

E_n = deck stacked with 26 twos and 26 aces of spades

A = the ace of spades

B = the two of spades

In this case:

$$P(A\&B/E_n) > > P(A\&B/E_o)$$

It should be recognized that we have not cheated the Multiplication Axiom; it is still true that $P(A\&B/E_n) < P(A/E_n)$. However, we have dramatically improved the probability of A&B by improving the evidential base; A&B are considerably more likely given E_n than E_o. Let us make another generalization:

[19] This figure is rough because it assumes that the original ace is returned to the deck for the second draw, so the second selection is with replacement, that is, with a complete set of 52 cards. If the second draw were not done with replacement, the probability of drawing a 2 of spades on the second draw would be 1/51; the probability of drawing the ace of spades and the 2 of spades in order would be 1/52 + 1/51 or slightly more than 1/26.

[20] I say 'roughly' because the second pick will come from a deck containing 51 cards.

Increases in the probability of independent hypotheses require an improvement in the evidential base.

In most cases, one can't simply stack one's evidence as one might stack the deck of cards. In order to improve one's evidential base, therefore, one will need to seek additional confirming evidence (without thereby discovering disconfirming evidence) or wholly new confirming evidence (without thereby discovering new disconfirming evidence).[21] Suppose, for example, that someone tells you that Del has purchased a new Cadillac. The likelihood that Del has purchased a new Cadillac given the testimonial evidence may be relatively high.

If,

E_o = the testimonial evidence that Del has purchased a new Cadillac

C = the hypothesis that Del has purchased a new Cadillac

then, $P(C/E_o)$ is relatively high.

If,

G = the hypothesis that Del's new car is green, then $P(C\&G/E_o)$ is much less than $P(C/E_o)$.

Suppose, however, Rebecca also tells one that she has just seen Del driving a green car.

If,

E_n = the testimonial evidence that Del has purchased a Cadillac and that someone saw Del driving a green car, Then, $P(C\&G/E_n) > P(C\&G/E_o)$.

E_n does not entail that Del has purchased a green Cadillac because Del might have been driving someone else's green car when seen by Rebecca. However, the conjunctive probability of C&G is improved by increasing one's evidential base.

With these basic probability tools, let's consider the claim that theology is not a science. Suppose we wish to assess the likelihood of the classical theist's interpretation of the passage in question given the evidence for the evangelical theologian (the linguistic marks on the pages of the Bible). Let us, following the classical theist's interpretation of the passage, "I will remember their sins no more," take

B = linguistic marks contained in the *Bible*

G = the hypothesis that God speaks in the Bible

N = the hypothesis that God speaks about God's *nature* in the Bible

P = the hypothesis that God is speaking about God's nature in this *passage* of the Bible.

M = the hypothesis that God is speaking *metaphorically* in this passage

[21] Since one is presumably interested in acquiring the truth one will not try to avoid disconfirming evidence.

I = the *interpretation* that God is speaking in a manner which preserves omniscience

B is our evidence and G, N, M, P and I are hypotheses accepted on the basis of that evidence. Let us first note, from the multiplication axiom, that

P(G&N&P&M&I/B) is considerably less than P(G/B)[22]

The question remains, what is

P(G&N&M&I/B)?

Suppose we make the (controversial) assumption that there are probability assignments for the relevant probabilities and that we can either know or reasonably believe them.[23] And let us be generous in our assignments of the probabilities so that the classical theist cannot accuse us of making unduly harsh and prejudicial assignments of probabilities.

First we need to assess the probability that God is speaking in the Bible (G), given the linguistic marks of Scripture (B); that is, what is P(G/B)? Here, of course, judgments of probability vary wildly. Many people (atheists or Buddhists, for example,) believe that this probability is quite low—to near zero. Christian and Jews, who do believe that God is speaking in the Bible, vary wildly in making these assignments. Richard Swinburne, for example, believes that the probability that God is speaking in the Bible is quite high.[24] Alvin Plantinga, on the other hand, believes that P(G/B) is quite low and, hence, requires the work of the Holy Spirit to make such a belief rational.[25] Let us, for the sake of the argument, take the *via media* and assign a relatively high value to P(G/B). Let us take it to be .75.

I won't pursue the way these probabilities are calculated in any detail, but will just make some rough but generous assignments for the remainder of the hypotheses. What is the probability that God is speaking of God's nature in the Bible given the linguistic marks on the page and that God is in the Bible: P(N/G&B)? Since most Christians believe this quite firmly, lest us assign this a value of .90. Even assuming that God reveals God's nature in the Bible, God surely does not reveal God's nature in every passage of Scripture. So we need to assess the hypothesis that God is speaking about God's nature in this *passage* of the Bible: P(P/N&G&B). Again, let us assign this a value of .9. And the classical theist believes that

[22] Strictly speaking, we are concerned with P(G&N&M&I/B&K) and P(G/B&K) where K is background knowledge. I omit considerations of K for sake of economy. It is not essential to the points being made. One caveat: Prior to any assessment of Scripture as revelatory, one needs to assess the probability that God exists (and, presumably, that God is interested in communicating to creatures, etc.). If these probabilities are not maximal, by this stage in our argument the probabilities under consideration have already declined by virtue of the multiplication axiom.

[23] I'm dubious of both assumptions. Is it so clear, for example, that there is both a value of P(G/B) and that we can know or reasonably believe what that value is? For a discussion of the issues in this neighborhood see my doctoral dissertation *Probabilistic Confirmation Theory and the Existence of God*, if you can find it in the inner recesses of Notre Dame's library. When you locate it, blow off the thick layer of accumulated dust.

[24] Richard Swinburne, *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, 2007).

[25] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

God is speaking metaphorically in this passage, so let's assign a high probability, .90, to P(M/P&N&G&B). And, finally, let us assign a high probability to the particular, presumably non-metaphorical interpretation of the passage offered by a classical theist. Given that classical theists differ in their non-metaphorical interpretations of the passage, we should not assign any particular interpretation an especially high value. So, let's assign P(I/M&P&N&G&B) = .75.

Given the particular probability assignments that we've given, can we very roughly calculate P(G&N&P&M&I/B)? Roughly P(G&N&P&M&I/B):

.75 x .9 x .9 x. 9 x .75 = .41

But .41 is hardly sufficient for rational conviction. Of course the open theist's interpretation is likewise quite low.

Here's the problem: as extra-biblical assumptions are multiplied, because the evidential base remains roughly the same, the probabilities decline. If one could increase one's evidential base in such a way as to justify one's extra-biblical assumptions, one could increase the probability of one's interpretation relative to that interpretation on the old evidence (the linguistic marks on the page). Unfortunately, the only ultimate authority for evangelical theologians is *sola scriptura* and, given the logical compossibility of any of the above assumptions (pro or con) with the linguistic marks on the page, any extra-biblical assumptions will not be demonstrable given the linguistic marks on the page. And, if the extra-biblical assumptions are merely probable given the linguistic marks on the page, we have shown that even generous assignments don't yield a correspondingly high conditional probability for any particular interpretation.

There might, of course, be good non-biblical reasons for making the assumptions that one makes. These non-biblical reasons may be sufficient to increase the probabilities of one's interpretations and, so, increase one's rationality. But, near as I can tell in this postmodern day and age, there are few relevant assumptions that all rational creatures are required to make. One might reasonably make such an assumption, but have failed to demonstrate that all creatures, on pain of irrationality, must also make such an assumption. So, the classical theist and the open theist might be rational in their beliefs, but nonetheless fail to make a case for their position that Christians in general are rationally obliged to accept. But this concession of rationality is bought with a dear price for the evangelical theologian who must admit how assumption-laden her interpretations are. Indeed, she must concede that judgments must be imported into her interpretation which are not entailed by Scripture itself, her only source of authority. And so, she does not, indeed cannot, defend her position based on Scripture alone.[26]

I have demonstrated that open theism and classical theism have low probability given the linguistic marks on the page. This should be sufficient to engender theological humility and fallibility in the evangelical theologian; one hopes that this might also create an atmosphere

[26] This argument is defended in detail in Kelly James Clark and Michael Schweiger, "Can the Bible Alone Resolve the Classical vs. Open Theism Debate?" (forthcoming). It should be noted that the relevant probability assignments involve dependent propositions so the actual calculations are more complicated than presented in this discussion. The results, however, are virtually identical.

of mutual respect and a healthy sense of the many possible legitimate interpretations of God's nature from the biblical data.

One might defend one's hermeneutical judgments as deduced from Scripture. But, of course, in order to know that one's hermeneutical judgments were deduced from Scripture, one would have to use those hermeneutical principles to determine what Scripture said. But if you use those hermeneutical principles to discern 'the' hermeneutical principles of the Bible, your attention will be drawn to those passages which support those hermeneutical principles and assign them a privileged position over and against passages to the contrary. This vicious hermeneutical circle undermines any claim to the exclusively correct understanding of the divine nature on these matters.

Underdetermination of Theology by the Biblical Data

There is a nearly universal acceptance of underdetermination of theory by data in the philosophy of science. Indeed, much of contemporary philosophy seems to embrace the general application of underdetermination of one's view of the world by the available evidence; there are competing world-hypotheses, each of which adequately accounts for the data. A plurality of beliefs may be rational, given any body of evidence.[27] However, Christians shrink from the underdetermination of theology by the biblical data.

It seems to me that conservative Christians shrink from underdetermination of theology by the biblical data because they are theological Cartesians. Descartes sought two things in his quest for certain knowledge. First, through his method of doubt, Descartes sought the indubitable foundations of knowledge from which all mere opinion and uncertainty had been removed. From the foundation of certitude he devised a method for infallibly inferring higher level beliefs. Careful scrutiny of one's foundational beliefs and careful attention to one's inferences and inferential beliefs ensures that the certainty of the foundations are transferred to non-foundational beliefs. Knowledge is equated with certainty and is attainable by Descartes' method. This deep-seated need for certainty is exacerbated by awareness of the multiplicity of human beliefs on matters of fundamental human concern and by the need to feel that one's own beliefs have "something going for them" unlike the beliefs of those who disagree with us. Cartesian justification may be seen as an instance of self-justification.

Christians are not immune from the desire for certainty and the need for self-justification. Indeed, Christian theologians often seem unusually susceptible to claims of certainty and, correspondingly, to claims of grievous and fatal error on the part of those who disagree with them. Combine the plurality of Christian beliefs on virtually every matter of faith and practice with the conviction that even a slight misstep on these issues has eternal (perhaps infinitely negative) consequences and the need for certainty becomes especially poignant.[28]

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[27] It does not follow from this that all of the beliefs are perforce justified or warranted. Nor does it follow that they are all true.

[28] Not every participant in this discussion is a theological Cartesian. Indeed, some are keenly aware of the limitations of their methods and are thusly circumspect about the nature of their theological convictions. Clark Pinnock, for example, in his foreword to Gannon Murphy's *Consuming Glory* (which critiques him) rightly notes that, "Neither one of us thinks that he has 'the whole truth and

Cartesianism finds theological manifestation first in the inerrancy or infallibility of Scripture. Since inerrancy most clearly manifests the Cartesian quest for certainty, I will focus on it. Suppose one believes that Scripture is inerrant in all matters of faith and practice (this is already a sidestep to inerrancy in all matters). God, therefore, has given us reliable, infallible, consistent, and unmistakable information about Godself and God's demands on our lives. Christians have a sure foundation for theorizing. The inerrancy of Scripture is scarcely adequate for settling what one should believe. At first glance, Scripture is a morass of history, myth, poetry, moral instruction, praise, hyperbole, prophecy, etc. Sorting through this bewildering array of literary genre, indeed assigning literary genre to any particular text, requires some sort of hermeneutical method. Even then, a hermeneutical method is required for resolving apparent conflicts. Are there a few passages that have some sort of special theological status against which all other passages must be judged and explained? Should, for example, the epistolary genre take precedence over the historical or poetical? Should the obscure be interpreted by the clear? And which passages are the clear ones? Again, some hermeneutical method is required to move reliably from biblical data to theological belief.

The desire for, indeed necessity of, hermeneutical method for determining theological beliefs is clear. If we are to have biblically-based theological beliefs at all, some sort of hermeneutical method is required. But theological Cartesianism doesn't want just any hermeneutic, it wants the hermeneutic which infallibly delivers the truth about God. Inerrancy is in itself incapable of delivering the goods; without a hermeneutic it tells us this, that, and nothing about God. An inerrant set of data must be coupled with an infallible hermeneutic to provide certain knowledge. So Christian theologians, at least of the conservative variety, seem committed not only to inerrant foundations but also to an infallible hermeneutic for constructing theology. Hermeneutics without inerrancy is empty; inerrancy without hermeneutics is blind.

Theological Cartesianism is deficient because of difficulties surrounding both inerrancy[29] and hermeneutics. For purposes of this paper, let us suppose that God indeed revealed Godself in such a way that the original biblical texts are without error in all matters of faith and practice. The threat of underdetermination of theological beliefs by the biblical data remains. Even if there is an inerrant biblical foundation for the development of true beliefs, acquiring true beliefs requires a hermeneutical method which moves from certain foundations to certain beliefs about God. But there is no single, hermeneutical method which is binding on all rational creatures. Without the correct method, there is no guarantee that one will use the biblical data to develop true beliefs.

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nothing but the truth.' Both of us are aware that rhetorical weapons can be turned back on ourselves." (*Consuming Glory*, ix.). Murphy, on the other hand, as a Reformed theologian with sympathies for the "classical" doctrine of God, similarly concedes, "'God talk' can be conducted such that it is cognitively apprehensible and not purely relative, but with the qualification that it is construed as *provisional*." (CG, 94). Pinnock and Murphy model a commendable collegial and humble dialogue, sans both the ad hominem attacks and the desire for irrefragable certainty.

[29] Contemporary Christians are at least two removes from the inerrant foundations. We simply do not have access to the original texts; indeed, all extent texts are hundreds of years newer than the autographa. Most people are forced to rely on translations from the ancient Hebrew and Greek and, again, translation is interpretation.

Norman Geisler, for one, is aware that philosophical hermeneutics and assumptions are necessary to biblical interpretation. Although he claims that open theists have failed to establish the biblical basis for their beliefs, he concedes that philosophy is necessary to theology. He writes:

> There is nothing wrong as such with having a philosophical influence on biblical and theological studies. Again, philosophy is necessary to both exegesis and systematic theology. One need only be sure that he is utilizing good philosophy. Whether it is "Platonic" or 'process' is not the question but rather whether it is *true*.[30]

If Geisler could demonstrate the true philosophy or true hermeneutical principles from Scripture alone, then he would be able to circumvent the problem of declining probabilities above and establish classical theism once and for all. Again, the problem of arguing in a circle looms: in order to establish the true philosophy from Scripture, one would have to assume the true philosophy in order to properly understand scripture. So Geisler's claim, while true, is breathtakingly naïve as a solution to the hermeneutical and philosophical problems that one faces when attempting to understand scripture.

Let us raise the issue with regard to (a) how one approaches the Bible in general and (b) how one approaches biblical passages in particular.

No Common Measure

John Henry Newman and William James are two post-enlightenment thinkers who are aware that reason is anything but neutral. Both recognize the pretension of the enlightenment claim to expose every belief to the searching criticism of pure reason. There is ample empirical evidence for the belief that rational arguments are effective or ineffective depending on one's presuppositions. There is, Newman claims, "no common measure between mind and mind."[31] Newman observes "how little depends upon the inferential proofs, and how much upon those pre-existing beliefs and views, in which men either already agree with each other or hopelessly differ, before they begin to dispute, and which are hidden deep in our nature, or, it may be, in our personal peculiarities." Our beliefs are unavoidably influenced by our assumptions, commitments and, according to James, temperament, needs, and desires.

Suppose pure reason is an unattainable idol. If we wish to rationally scrutinize our beliefs we are forced to bring all that we value to bear on our assessment of the evidence. Our assessment of the evidence, especially in matters of fundamental human concern (e.g., God, ethics, politics, etc.) is a function of our fundamental values and commitments. Newman writes: "We judge for ourselves, by our own lights, and on our own principles; and our criterion of truth is not so much the manipulation of propositions, as the intellectual and moral character of the person maintaining them, and the ultimate silent effect of his arguments or conclusions upon our minds."[32] Newman does not deny that there are

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[30] Norman Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man?* (Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 96-97.

[31] John Henry Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) Hereafter "GA".

[32] Ibid., 240.

arguments, indeed, very good arguments, for certain philosophical positions. Rather he believes that our intellectual and moral character affect our ability to see the truth of the premises and, therefore, our ability to judge rightly. Who we are determines what we are inclined to believe. There are at least two moral obstacles to perceiving the truth aright; Newman claims that our perception of the fundamental premises of an argument "is enfeebled, obstructed, perverted, by allurements of sense and the supremacy of self."[33] Other obstacles to perceiving true beliefs are prejudice, passion, and self-interest. In certain cases of significant human beliefs, seeing the truth requires moral rectitude.

James, like Newman, holds that philosophical arguments are expressions of temperament and reason.[34] James claims that inquiry in the humanities and social sciences, in everyday life, and even in science unavoidably reflects our 'willing' or 'passional' nature—our temperament, needs, concerns, fears, hopes, and passions. He writes: "Pretend what we may, the whole man is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs."[35] We rely, fundamentally, on the way things seem to us, not on theory-free rational intuition. Every philosopher, James claims, "has taken his stand on a sort of dumb conviction that the truth must lie in one direction rather than another."[36] We come to philosophy with our 'dumb convictions'—pre-philosophical presuppositions about the way things seem to us. And the way things seem to us is a function of both our sentiments (temperament or tastes) and reason. Our willingness to accept or reject premises of an argument is, therefore, a function of our sentiments.

We have been discussing the psychology of believings, but for James these descriptive claims are epistemic claims because of his affirmation of what has come to be called "the underdetermination of theory by data." Underdetermination holds that for any set of data, there are many hypotheses which adequately explain the data but which are mutually incompatible with one another. James writes:

> There is nothing improbable in the supposition that an analysis of the world may yield a number of formulæ, all consistent with the facts. In physical science different formulæ may explain the phenomena equally well. . . . Why may it not be so with the world? Why may there not be different points of view for surveying it, within each of which all data harmonize, and which the observer may therefore either choose between, or simply cumulate one upon another? A Beethoven string-quartet is truly, as someone has said, a scraping of horses's tails on cats' bowels, and may be exhaustively described in such terms; but the application of this description in no way precludes the simultaneous applicability of an entirely different description.[37]

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[33] Ibid., 247.

[34] James puts reason and sentiments in a dichotomous relationship. I don't think it is a simple matter of "either-or." There is a sentimental (evaluative?) side of reason and a rational side of sentiments.

[35] William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," in *The Will to Believe and other essays in popular philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 92. Hereafter SR.

[36] Ibid., 93.

[37] Ibid., 76.

Most of our theories of the world—philosophical, common-sensical or even scientific—are underdetermined by the evidence that supports them; they are consistent with the facts but the facts are not so compelling that their competitors are logically inconsistent with the facts. When two such theories are in competition, no appeal to the evidence, therefore, could determine the winner. In order to assess our beliefs, we must bring all that we as human beings have to bear on these matters. In such cases, James suggests the following for deciding what to believe: "Well, of two conceptions equally fit to satisfy the logical demand, that one which awakens the active impulses or satisfies the æsthetic demands better than the other, will be accounted the more rational, and will deservedly prevail."[38] Different persons, with differing "dumb convictions," will find different active impulses awakened and different æsthetic demands satisfied. So, radically different beliefs are or could be rational for sincere inquirers after the truth.

I will discuss, in the following sections, the implications of underdetermination for open and classical theism. And in the concluding sections will demonstrate how sentiment and temperament are involved in apparently neutral defenses of classical and open theism based on the biblical data.

Counting the Cost

I have argued classical theism does not have any advantage over open theism by virtue of being a better explanation of the biblical data.[39] Open theism is at least as epistemically permissible a theological option as classical theism; both open and classical theists could be rational in their theological views. And, given the problem of declining probabilities (given the linguistic marks on the pages), both sides should hold their views in humility and openness to correction.

In this section, we shall resort to sheer speculation. The impetus for this speculation is the Platonism of both open and classical theists. As demonstrated in a preceding section, open theism is not above a little Platonizing in its reading of biblical texts. However, I am curious about where and why the line is drawn on anthropomorphism. Let me speculate about the "why" for both open and classical theists. I will relate my speculations about the "why" to the discussion of James and Newman on the nature of believings. Eschewing reason's neutrality, Newman and James claim that our beliefs are influenced by our assumptions, commitments, temperament, needs, fears, hopes, and desires. Everyone comes to philosophy, theology even, with their 'dumb convictions'— philosophical presuppositions about the way things seem to us. What are the passions to which classical or open theism appeal? In this section I will consider the psychological factors involved in accepting classical or open theism. I will raise some of the significant benefits and costs of each view. I will not shrink from caricature for this reason: caricature is the stock and trade of theologians on both sides of this argument and it is often precisely the caricatures which move the passions against a certain view.

[38] Ibid.

[39] It does have other advantages, of course. It is part of the received tradition and so is enshrined as orthodoxy. It is curious, however, how Protestant classical theists have become as enthusiastically wedded to tradition as their 16th century Roman Catholic protagonists.

Let us first consider classical theism. The alleged benefits of classical theism are abundant; let me mention just a few:

1. Divine providence is so meticulous that God takes no risks. God's purposes will be exactly fulfilled in every detail.
2. God's love, goodness, and faithfulness are metaphysically grounded (and, hence, cannot be lost or changed).
3. God accords with our idea of perfection.
4. God has a reason for every evil.

But these alleged benefits are not bought without a price, some of which relate directly to the so-called benefits. Consider some alleged corresponding costs:

1. Meticulous providence diminishes significant human freedom and undermines petitionary prayer.
2. An impassive, immutable, etc. being is distant and unconcerned.
3. The Platonizing tendencies impose a view on God contrary to the view of God as revealed in Scripture.
4. God, as the ultimate source of all things, is implicated in evil.

This list is not exhaustive but it does raise most of the major points of contention between classical and open theism.

Open theism has its own, closely related, list of alleged benefits and costs. Its alleged benefits are as follows:

1. Firm commitment to a robust view of human freedom and the significant role of human beings in working with God to accomplish God's purposes.
2. Better fit with piety; we have a need for a God who suffers with us and who hears our prayers.
3. More natural, non *a priori*, reading of the Bible (let God tell us who God is).
4. Moral evil is wholly attributable to created, free persons.

Again, open theism is not without it alleged costs:

1. God takes huge risks (re: human salvation, the outcome *could* be 0-100%).
2. We want a God not so overcome by emotion that God cannot act in our best interest. We don't want a God who accedes to finite, self-interested human prayers.
3. The excessive anthropomorphism threatens to create God in our own image.
4. Diminishes God's sovereignty and even God.

Thus we have the alleged benefits and costs of classical and open theism.

That there are benefits and costs to theology is obvious. That people bring their needs, desires, hopes, and fears to the assessment of their theology is not so well recognized. One might put the matter thusly:

> People are attracted to Molinism and Calvinism to ensure that God had a good reason for this (horrific evil) so it does make sense. People are attracted to openness because they cannot handle God planning such evil but that God can bring good out of it. Thus, it goes beyond biblical and philosophical dimensions to the personal dimension as to which view seems more meaningful to you and helps you live.[40]

In the following paragraphs I will offer brief yet representative expression of the sentiment that theology is an expression of our hopes and desires.

John Sanders builds explicit consideration of human satisfactions into his criteria for theology. Sanders claims that a criterion of the rationality of the theology is adequacy for the demands of life:

> The proposed model must be relevant to the real-life situations faced by the community. The theological model needs to help us in our relationships with God, others, the creation and ourselves. It must be useful in enhancing such activities as prayer, comforting the suffering and acting responsibly in the world. Not only must the model be judged as to whether it is adequate on the corporate level, it must also be evaluated on the individual level. Though all of us are situated within specific communities, we nevertheless have our own personal experiences and identities that shape our evaluation of any particular model concerning its adequacy for helping us cope with life. Thus everyone will not necessarily evaluate the model in the same way.[41]

In another context, Sanders says that when he first started studying theology, he tried to understand where the medieval theologians wanted to go. Then he remarks: "I did not want to go there."[42]

Classical theists are likewise moved by extra-biblical concerns. Norman Geisler seems deeply committed to the hope that God is in total control of everything, including the future: "But if God does not even know the future, to say nothing of controlling it, then he cannot guarantee its outcome."[43] If God is not in complete control of anything, how can he be in control of anything? Tom Ascol contends that in rejecting meticulous providence and complete foreknowledge: "The open theistic vision of God is one that robs believers of comfort and confidence."[44] The open God is, according to Ascol, an unsuccessful "Cosmic

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[40] It's quite possible that someone ***has*** put the matter thusly. I have this in my notes as a quotation from a prominent Christian philosopher's public lecture. When contacted, he didn't recall making the statement and did not want it attributed to him.

[41] Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 18.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1997) p. 68. Although this is simply a restatement of open theism, Geisler offers it as a devastating criticism.

[44] Ascol, op. cit. This quotation and the following assertions are found throughout his essay.

Gambler," whose willingness to risk destroys the biblical foundation for trust and hope. The only ground for hope and trust is a God who meticulously plans, exhaustively knows, and providentially ordains every future event. John Piper seems similarly concerned. He asks a series of questions of what might follow if God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future: "Can such a God really be trusted? Can we really have confidence in his direction and will for our lives? Is this God really in control of the unfolding events and progression of human history?"[45] Later he draws this conclusion: "What is lost in open theism is the Christian's confidence in God."[46]

In this section, I have tried to illustrate the Newman-James claim that rationality is a function both of reason and of the sentiments. In their respective defenses of their views, classical and open theists are likely to make appeal to the biblical evidence. But this evidence is not theory-free. Both sides, I have argued, use a Platonist lens to view the evidence. And both bring all that they are as persons to bear on the weighting of the evidence.

Conclusion

If the Bible is not terribly interested in metaphysical speculation, and I think it is not, it should not be surprising to learn that metaphysical speculation is difficult to root in the Bible. Consider the book of Job in which the prologue treats God as not unlike a riverboat gambler placing a wager on Job's fidelity the outcome of which God guesses wrong. In the second section, Job himself seems to consider God as a chaotic, sadistic monster; Job treats God as his rough equal (except that God, like all bullies, has a lot more power). And, in the divine speeches, God reveals his majestic power but in ways that might appear to humans as little more than what Job feared.[47] By and large, the ancient Hebrews seem unconcerned with tidying up their multifarious views of God. Classical theism and open theism alike might seem wildly beyond their ken.[48]

Let me conclude on a salutary note. Whether or not open or classical theism is true, there is a host of beliefs on which both sides are in agreement. Indeed, I suspect that they are in agreement on the most important matters: that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. And they agree on a host of divine attributes: God is merciful and just, faithful and forgiving, concerned about human welfare, involved in human affairs. Perhaps it's time to stop focusing on the obscure but relatively trivial matters on which classical and open theists disagree and remind ourselves on the clear and crucially important matters on which we do agree.[49]

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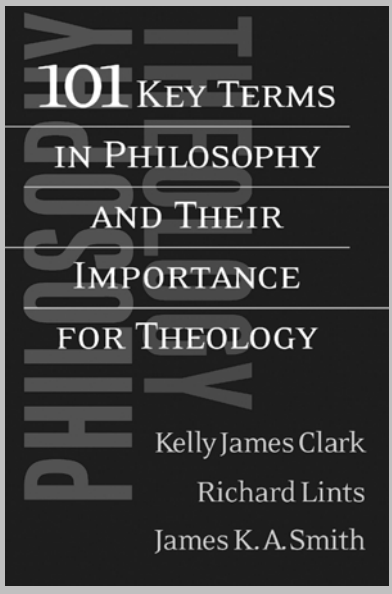
[45] John Piper, *God's Lesser Glory*, p. 18. One wonders, given the necessity of exhaustive foreknowledge to real trust, if Piper trusted his parents. One might think that unconditional love, desire for the other's good, and ability to work with one for one's own good are sufficient to ground trust.

[46] Piper, ibid., p. 20.

[47] This is a gross caricature of Job, but it does contain within a short space some remarkably distinct portraits of divinity. For a longer discussion of the book of Job, see my *When Faith is Not Enough* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), ch. 5.

[48] I suspect that the ancient Hebrews would find open theism more to their liking. But they would also likely find Ptolemaic astronomy more to their liking (and they probably thought that heaven was located just above the sky, etc.).

[49] One might note the decided lack of speculation about the nature of the Father in the ecumenical



Written by two philosophers and a theologian, *101 Key Terms* provides easy access to key terms in philosophy and how they are understood and used in theology. The focused entries discuss what the terms have meant in classical and contemporary philosophy and then shift to what these philosophical understandings have meant in the history of Christian theology to the present day. The result is a unique volume that clearly shows the interplay of these disciplines and how theology has been influenced by the language and vocabulary of philosophy.

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creeds. The Apostles Creed states simply: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth." The Nicene Creed is no less spare: "We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." It is curious that what the early church failed to consider crucial or necessary is now held up as normative.

POST-SECULAR FAITH: TOWARD A RELIGION OF SERVICE

Fred Dallmayr[1]

But I am among you as one who serves (Luke 22:27)

In its mundane involvement, religion is full of surprises—which, on reflection, should not actually be surprising. If religion means the connection (or re-connection) of human life with the divine, and if the latter can never be fully plumbed, domesticated or exhausted, then the spirit animating religion is surprise *per se*. In our time, the big surprise—for many observers—is the return of religion into the political arena, a return which Gilles Kepel has depicted as "the revenge of God."[2] After having been exiled (in Western societies) from the public domain and narrowly confined to the field of private taste, religion in its various guises is suddenly back on the scene, with unsettling and often disruptive consequences.

The return has elicited conflicting responses. For some observers—especially devotees of the modern liberal state—the upsurge of religion constitutes an assault on the basic acquisitions of modernity: principally the neutrality of the state, enlightened rationality, and the principle of religious freedom, that is, the freedom of individuals both for and from religion. For others—chiefly religious traditionalists—the upsurge signals a welcome renewal of the past, coupled with the defeat of modern Enlightenment and secular liberalism. In many contemporary debates, these two positions tend to monopolize the stage. However, there is the possibility—and this is the assumption that guides the following pages—that religion is indeed returning, but in a new or (what may be called) "post-secular" form, a form where religion, traversing modern secularism, is freed from the hierarchical tross of the past.[3] This possibility heralds a new meaning of religious freedom and also the prospect of (what I shall call) a religion of service.

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[2] See Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, trans. Alan Braley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); also Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[3] On the notion "post-secular," compare these comments by Jürgen Habermas: "The expression *post-secular* does not merely acknowledge publicly the functional contribution that religious communities make to the reproduction of desired motives and attitudes. Rather, the public consciousness of post-secular society reflects a normative insight that has consequences for how believing and unbelieving citizens interact with one another politically. In post-secular society, the realization that 'the modernization of public consciousness' takes hold of and reflexively alters religious as well as secular mentalities in staggered phases is gaining acceptance." ["On the Relations Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion," in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), p. 258]. See also my "Rethinking Secularism—with Raimon Panikkar," in *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 185-200.

This prospect can be assessed in numerous ways, but also in terms of Max Weber's notion of "legitimacy." As is well known, Weber in his writings presents legitimacy as an "inner justification" which renders a given social and political order meaningful and acceptable in a durable sense. As an historical sociologist, he differentiates several types of such justification—among which I select only two. Pre-modern or traditional societies, in his view, were held together by "traditional legitimacy" anchored in (what he calls) "the authority of the 'eternal yesterday'," that is the mores and religious beliefs sanctified by their age and presumably sacred origin. A dramatic change occurred with the onset of modernity (in the West), a change which sidelined mores and religious beliefs in favor of the pure "legality" of a given regime. At this point, a public order is seen as legitimated—we might say: "thinly" legitimated—by virtue of the "validity of legal statutes," a validity deriving from the assumption that rules are "rationally established by enactment, contract, or imposition."[4] Broadly speaking, this "legal" kind of justification forms the bedrock of the modern secular "law state" (*Rechtsstaat*), where older mores and beliefs retreat into the privacy of psychic tastes. The question which arises here, and which Weber did not consider, is whether the bifurcation of public and private spheres is viable in the long run—which leads to the further query whether perhaps a new kind of "post-secular" religiosity is emerging making room for a new form of justification or legitimacy.

To explore these questions I proceed in three steps. First, I turn to William James's famous lectures on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, together with a recent discussion of these lectures by Charles Taylor. As will be seen, the Weberian difference between premodern and modern forms of justification is transposed in Taylor's discussion into a Durkheimian vocabulary. In a second step, I introduce a distinction between modes of religious faith which, although indebted to James, moves beyond Jamesian psychology: the distinction between a religion of authority or mastery and a religion of service. By way of conclusion, I reflect on the implications of this distinction for contemporary domestic and global politics.

Varieties of Religious Experience

William James presented his Gifford Lectures on "The Varieties of Religious Experience" in Edinburgh over a hundred years ago (1901-1902). At that time, psychology had just established itself as a new mode of inquiry and was attracting broad attention among both European and American intellectuals. This background is important for an understanding of the lectures. As a psychologist, albeit a very philosophical psychologist, James regarded religion basically as a mode of psychic experience—or as the name for a variety of psychic experiences—rather than a theological doctrine or official creed. As he confesses in his Preface, a possible title of his lectures—one he later abandoned—was "man's religious appetites." The opening lecture is even more explicit in this respect. Disclaiming any expertise as a theologian or "a scholar learned in the history of religions," James presents psychology as "the only branch of learning in which I am particularly versed"—a competence which suggested as the proper theme of his lectures a "descriptive survey of religious propensities." The second lecture goes a step further by spelling out the

[4] See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" and "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 78-79, 294-295. I bypass here the issue of "charismatic" legitimacy.

meaning of such phrases as "religious propensities" or "religious sentiments" and identifying the latter as particular "states of mind."[5] With these statements and elaborations, James clearly showed himself to be a "modernist" concerned mainly with the inwardness of religious feeling rather than its broader social role—although the lecture's overall thrust was to rescue religious sentiment from neglect and to vindicate its general relevance.

The "inward" orientation is underscored and corroborated in subsequent passages of the lectures. Basically, James divides religion, or the phenomena characterizing the "religious field," into two broad branches: "On the one side…lies institutional, on the other personal religion"; the former branch keeps "the divinity," the second "man" uppermost in view. In the first branch, James lumps together a host of practices, customs, and formal settings: "worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization"—all features which, in his view, define religion as "an external art, the art of winning the favor of the gods." What James' comments here seem to anticipate, in an uncanny way, is Weber's notion of "traditional legitimacy" predicated on established beliefs and habitual forms of doing things—although his own concerns are far removed from questions of legitimacy. What matters to the psychologist is not the external tross but the domain of privately inward feeling—a domain set free by modernity and the consequences of the Reformation. "In the more personal branch of religion," he writes, "it is on the contrary the inner dispositions of man himself which form the center of interest: his conscience, his deserts, his helplessness, his incompleteness." Stressing further the inward outlook—and sidelining even further questions of public legitimacy—James defines the core of personal religion as involving: "the feeling, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[6]

About a hundred years after James's lectures, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor took up the leads contained in the former's arguments in an effort to pinpoint their relevance or significance in our own secular or post-secular age. Curiously, the initial impulse was another set of Gifford Lectures presented by Taylor in 1999—in the course of which he encountered anew the work of his predecessor and decided to offer some of his own reflections or afterthoughts (published in 2002 under the title *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*). As one should note right away, Taylor's reflections are not a pliant *explication de texte*. Although genuinely appreciative of James's work, the point of the "revisitation" is also critical and reconstructive. As the very first page tells us, James had "certain blind spots in his view of religion"—blind spots which are "widespread in the modern world." The main qualm permeating Taylor's entire text is the narrow accent on individual feeling and personal or private inwardness. "James," Taylor writes, "sees religion primarily as something that individuals experience." Hence he makes a sharp divide "between living religious experience, which is that of the individual, and religious life, which

[5] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, 36th impression (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), pp. v, 2-3, 27-28. As James insisted, religious emotions are ordinary "human" emotions like others: "If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that a neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity" (p. 27).

[6] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 28-29, 31.

is derivative because it is taken over from a community or church." Particularly troubling in this context is the core definition of personal religion (cited above) with its accent on "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude." Thus, a central facet of the Jamesian approach, Taylor observes, is the role of experience or feeling set over "against the formulations by which people define, justify, rationalize their feelings" (operations frequently undertaken by churches).[7]

To some readers, Taylor's critical qualms might suggest a nostalgic traditionalism—which would be far off the mark. Although respectful of churches, Taylor is fully aware of the danger of "corporate" or "dogmatic dominion" and in strong sympathy with the historical trend (in the West) toward individual religious freedom. His text offers a captivating overview of the main manifestations of this trend. As he notes, at least since the late Middle Ages, we can see in Western societies "a steadily increasing emphasis on a religion of personal commitment and devotion over forms centered on collective ritual." Evident initially in devotional movements and associations closely linked with the church, the trend reached a new stage with the Reformation which, by insisting on salvation through faith alone (*sola fide*), had the effect of radically devaluing "ritual and external practices in favor of inward adherence to Christ as Savior." Subsequently, the same tendency was picked up by the Counter-Reformation which spawned devotional movements of its own and proceeded to regulate the lives of believers along higher levels of inward commitment. Viewed against this background, James's "take on religion"—in Taylor's account—appears to be quite "in line with our modern understanding" which stipulates that, to take religion seriously, means "to take it personally, more devotionally, inwardly, more committedly."[8]

In an effort to provide sociological scaffolding to the sketched historical trend, Taylor turns mainly to Emile Durkheim, especially the latter's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.[9] As he notes, religion for Durkheim was basically a collective undertaking, a "life-form" where religion furnishes society with ultimate meaning by correlating mundane arrangements and sacred significance. In its traditional meaning, religion supported something like an "enchanted world," a world where God was seen as present in society, namely, "in the loci of the sacred." Later periods brought a growing "disenchantment" (in Weber's sense). Metaphysically speaking, Taylor observes, "there was a shift from the enchanted world [of the past] to a cosmos conceived in conformity with post-Newtonian science," a cosmos regulated and held together by natural laws. To the extent that it persisted, religious belief—rather than finding the sacred in the world—now construed it as a transcendent principle, relegating God to the role of a distant "designer" or architect of the world. In social and political terms, this change translated into a society of individual designers or entrepreneurs,

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[7] Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 3-5, 7. As the text adds in an intriguing aside, this applies to believers as well as non-believers—as is evident in the "ethics of belief" sponsored by agnostics.

[8] *Varieties of Religion Today*, pp. 9-11, 13-14. Taylor cites at this point W. K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays*, ed. Leslie Stephen and F. Pollock (London: Watts, 1947); and also William James, *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[9] Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 5th ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires Françaises, 1968). For an English version, see *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

fashioning social life contractually in accordance with general laws (or the designs of "nature's God"). In large measure, this vision inspired the modern nation-state seen as the "law state" coupling higher norms with individual rights. In more recent times, this precarious "synthesis" gave way to a further loosening of social bonds and to what Taylor calls the "new individualism" of late modernity.[10]

Simplifying his historical account somewhat, Taylor introduces a number of variations on the Durkheimian conception of "religious life." Basically, three such variations are juxtaposed in the manner of ideal types: a "paleo-Durkeimian," a "neo-Durkheimian" and a "post-Durkheimian" dispensation or arrangement. The first type corresponds in essence to the traditionalist understanding of religion as the warrant of an "enchanted" world and emblem of a divinely sanctioned authority structure. The second or "neo-Durkheimian" dispensation refers to the coexistence of religion and society in the modern state where a "neutral" or procedural framework makes room for a variety of churches, denominations, and sects. In this neo-Durkheimian mode, Taylor states that we find "an important step toward the individual and the right of choice. One joins a denomination because it seems right to one"—although there is still a pervasive sense that all choices are somehow held together by a broader, divinely designed architecture. This assumption erodes or vanishes in the "non-" or "post-Durkheimian" setting inaugurated or unleashed by the "new individualism." At this point, the last traces of social "holism" and a unified church structure give way to a radical celebration of private inwardness.[11]

Returning to the lectures of his famous predecessor, Taylor places William James basically in the context of an emerging post-Durkheimian world. Although separated from us by a century, he notes, James is "very close to the spirit of contemporary society" in that he was "already living in his own post-Durkheimian dispensation." The basic question animating Taylor's text can be put in this manner: Has the new individualism really succeeded in erasing all modes of religious or spiritual holism? Differently phrased: Does the accent on "personal religion"—while valuable as a crucial harbinger of religious freedom—really preclude the possibility of shared religious practices in a social and political community? Properly pursued, this question brings into view the contours of a "post-secular" (rather than post-Durkheimian) society and with it the prospect of a post-secular mode of public legitimacy. Without using the latter terminology, Taylor at least gestures in that direction. Although the modern intellectual trajectory, he queries, has a strongly inward or "individualist component," does this necessarily mean or entail that the content of belief will be "individuating"? For Taylor, people cultivating or taking seriously their personal religious life may still find it helpful and even compelling today to participate in shared practices—whether church services, communal prayers, or outreach activities. "Many people are not satisfied with a momentary sense of vow! They want to take it further."[12]

At another point of his text, Taylor ventures still a bit further into the terrain of a post-secular religiosity. Suppose, he argues (and I freely paraphrase), that we do not wish to return to the constraints of a "paleo-Durkheimian" collectivism. Suppose we wish to have no truck with the bigotries of "corporate" or "dogmatic dominion" of the past and prefer to

[10] Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today*, pp. 65-67, 77, 88.
[11] Ibid, pp. 93-94, 96.
[12] Ibid, pp. 111-112, 115-116.

celebrate—with James—the modern trend toward inwardness as a gateway to religious freedom: does this attitude really confine us to "experiences of individual men in their solitude"? Does an inwardly cultivated religious commitment not rather stimulate the desire to share our lives with other people and to participate in their joys and agonies? In the Hegelian terminology familiar to James, is there not ample room for transitions, linkages, and mediations? Let us imagine, Taylor continues, that a religious calling—or the demand laid upon as by God—is not so much a call to solitude as rather a call to service. Let us further imagine that what we are asked to do is "to live together in brotherly love, and to radiate outward such love as a community." If we accept this supposition, then the locus of religious life, or of our "relation with God," is also—indeed *has to be* also—"through the community, and not simply in the individual."[13] But if this is so, then the isolating post-Durkheimian setting gives way to a post-secular social setting in which religious belief can again be a resource of social responsibility and ethical legitimacy.

Toward a Religion of Service

Apart from discussing James's work, Taylor's text points in the direction of a new social religiosity—although his comments remain sketchy and brief. As it happens, he has fleshed out his views a bit more on other occasions. One such occasion was his Marianist Award Lecture of 1996 on the possibility of a "Catholic modernity." The central issue addressed in the lecture is whether a mode of religious commitment can be preserved in the modern and contemporary context—without succumbing to the "new individualism" or being confined to a privatized inwardness. As in the *Varieties* book, the answer for Taylor cannot be found in a simple return to the past, especially not the "paleo-Durkheimian" dispensation of traditional "Christendom" wedded to corporate or dogmatic dominion over people. The question remains, however, whether modern religion is necessarily limited—with James—to the feelings of "individual men in their solitude," or whether it can radiate out into social and public life in non-coercive ways, thereby regaining a "holistic" quality. Taylor clearly opts for the second alternative. A new Christian spirituality is emerging, he notes, and can be described "either as a love or compassion that is unconditional…or as one based on what you are most profoundly, a being in the image of God." In either case, the love is not predicated on "the worth realized in you just as an individual" or as an isolated creature: "Our being in the image of God is also our standing among others in the stream of love"—which demands service to others.[14]

In many ways, Taylor's turn to a religiosity of service was anticipated by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur in writings penned several decades ago. The starting point of Ricoeur's reflections was precisely the modern move toward privatization and religious inwardness—a move which he both welcomed as a gateway to religious freedom, and criticized as a possible retreat or exodus of faith from the world and social concerns. As he wrote hopefully in a 1958 essay: "After several centuries during which Christians have been

[13] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[14] James L. Heft, ed., *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 18-19, 35. For a discussion of this text and other writings by Taylor, compare my "Global Modernization: Toward Different Modernities" in *Dialogue Among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), esp., pp. 97-100.

preoccupied with the inner life and personal salvation, we are discovering afresh what is meant by 'you are the salt of the earth' (Matthew 5:13). We are discovering that the salt is made for salting, the light for illuminating, and that the church exists for the sake of those outside itself." Like Taylor later, Ricoeur was not enamored with the "paleo-Durkheimian" arrangement where church and faith exert a dominant political control in society. Despite the long historical trajectory toward freedom, he noted, the old dispensation still tends to assert or re-assert itself in many guises. There is still widespread illusion that religion can play "a direct political role as an independent political power." But another alternative is possible: "When it emerges from this illusion, the church will be able to give light once more to all men—no longer as a power, but as a prophetic message." Giving light to all men means to serve, guard, and rescue. "Christian love," Ricoeur adds, "consists in seeking out the fresh forms of poverty which occur at any period" (where poverty includes all forms of deprivation, oppression and injustice). Today, in our globalizing age, it must "direct its attention toward the great world problems."[15]

In the meantime, the critique of religious mastery in the paleo-Durkheimian mode has spread from isolated remonstrations to broader intellectual endeavors including theology, philosophy of religion, and (even) political philosophy. In the theological domain, the critique finds resonance in a current of thought aiming to shift the emphasis from a sovereign (possibly imperial) creator God to the legacy of the "suffering servant" extolled by Deutero-Isaiah, a legacy sometimes linked with the notion of a "co-suffering" of God with the world.[16] In some respects, this shift joins hands with "liberation theology," characterized by an accent on "exodus" from unjust power structures and a "preferential" engagement for the poor.[17] Somewhat surprisingly—because of the usual association of politics with power—the critique of the religion of mastery also surfaces today in versions of political theory or philosophy. For purposes of illustration I choose the theorist William Connolly because his writings fully resonate with this critique—and also re-connect us again with the work of William James. In a recent book titled *Pluralism*, Connolly pays tribute to James as the author not only of *Varieties of Religious Experience* but also of *A Pluralistic Universe*—a text penned a few years after his Gifford Lectures. For Connolly, James was a pioneering thinker who, ahead of many others, was able to articulate modern (and perhaps

[15] Paul Ricoeur, "Ye Ar the Salt of the Earth," in *Political and Social Essays*, ed. David Stewart and Joseph Bien (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 105, 115-117, 123. Compare also my "Religious Freedom: Preserving the Salt of the Earth," in *In Search of the Good Life: A Pedagogy for Troubled Times* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), pp. 205-219. In one of his late writings, Ricoeur returned to the question of religious faith, placing the emphasis strongly on a religion of service in opposition to a religion of domination. See Ricoeur, *Vivant jusqu'à la mort, suivi de Fragments* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2007), esp., pp. 89-91.

[16] Cf. Abraham Heschel, "The Theology of Pathos," in *The Prophets*, Vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 1-11.

[17] Among the proponents of this perspective, Gustavo Gutierrez is well known for his defense of Bartolemé de Las Casas and his role as "protector of the Indians" against imperial Spain, which then was the embodiment of paleo-Durkheimian ambitions. See Gustavo Gutierrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). See also his *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

postmodern) sensibilities not by relying on abstract categories but by turning to concretely lived experience. In pursuing this path, he was "a partner of Henri Bergson" and a "precursor" of such later thinkers as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. His turn to concrete experience prompted James to reject the notion of a fully mapped, totally transparent, and rationally intelligible cosmos. As he wrote in *A Pluralistic Universe*: "The substance of reality may never get totally collected…some of it may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made."[18] The inference Connolly draws from this statement is that "there is no omnipotent, omniscient God outside or above the world who gathers all of the universe together into one system of intelligible relations—though there may be a limited God who participates as one important actor among others in the world."[19]

In the domain of religious faith, Connolly, together with James, opposes the idea of a sovereign, imperial deity—a stance which leads him also to critique recent attempts to restore paleo-Durkheimian arrangements in the West. Addressing some fellow theorists overly nostalgic of the past, he chides their hankering for a religion of mastery, manifest in an "exclusionary, imperious sensibility" favoring the imposition of a uniform creed. In challenging dogmatic uniformity, Connolly does not mean to lend aid and comfort to the simple privatization of faith, to the neo-Durkheimian separation of the neutral state and the private inwardness of belief. As he observes in a striking formulation: defenders of liberal neutrality pretend to identify "a forum entirely above faith through which to regulate diverse faiths"—while ignoring "faith practices themselves." Hence, he adds, "if the nobility of secularism resides in its quest to enable multiple faiths to exist on the same public space, its shallowness resides in the hubris of its distinction between private faith and public reason." By taking religious practices seriously, Connolly's book also departs from *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by transgressing the feelings of "solitary men" in the direction of shared religious engagements, a shared "post-secular" sensibility conducive to public legitimacy. "Deep pluralism," he writes, "reinstates the link between practice and belief that had been artificially severed by secularism; and it overturns the impossible counsel to bracket your faith when you participate in politics."[20]

Multiple Faiths in a Shared World

Connolly's text is important here not only for its Jamesian sensibilities but also for its attention to multiple faith traditions and the desirability of fostering "generous" relations between them. His notion of a "deep" or "expansive" pluralism gains its acute significance precisely in the context of our globalizing and pluri-cultural world. "The most urgent need today," he writes, "is to mix presumptively generous sensibilities into a variety of theistic and nontheistic creeds, sensibilities attuned to the contemporary need to transfigure relations of antagonism between faiths into relations of agonistic respect." The point here is not to obliterate differences between faiths in a bland ecumenicism, but to forge "a positive ethos

[18] William James, *A Pluralist Universe* (1909; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 34.

[19] William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 70-71, 74.

[20] Connolly, *Pluralism*, pp. 48, 59, 64. As he adds (p. 65): "The public ethos of pluralism pursued here, solicits the active cultivation of pluralist virtues by each faith and the negotiation of a positive ethos of engagement between them.…I am thereby a proponent of civic virtue. But the public virtues embraced are pluralist virtues." Compare also his "Pluralism and Faith," in *Political Theologies*, de Vries and Sullivan, eds., pp. 278-297.

of public engagement between alternative faiths."[21] A prominent exemplar fostering such an ethos is Jonathan Sacks, widely renowned as a religious leader, intellectual, writer, and peace-maker. Although intensely involved in inter-faith relations, Sacks is not a shallow believer; he is an orthodox Jew and, in fact, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Britain and the Commonwealth. Among his numerous writings, particularly relevant in the present context is his book *The Dignity of Difference* (2002). Subtitled *How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, the book seeks to make a contribution to inter-faith harmony and, through it, global peace. To advance this goal, Sacks stresses that something more is required than mere coexistence or even shallow tolerance among faiths. "My primary aim," he writes, "has been to suggest a new paradigm for our complex, interconnected world, in such a way that, the more passionately we feel our religious commitment, the more space we make for those who are not like us."[22]

As one should note well, passionately held religious commitment here does not suggest a hankering for political power. Together with Taylor and Connolly, Sacks is not a devotee of paleo-Durkheimian dispositions or a religion of mastery—nor is there a favoring of retreat into privacy. As he states: "Religious leaders should never seek power, but neither may they abdicate their task of being a counter-voice [or a voice resisting oppression and injustice] in the conversation of mankind." In a stunning formulation, Sacks articulates an idea which belongs to the core of a religion of service. Faith communities "should encourage its members to do an act of service or kindness to someone or some group of another faith or ethnicity—to extend a hand of help, in other words, *across* the boundaries of difference and thus turn communities outward instead of inward." As a believing Jew, Sacks invites members of other faith communities to join him in prayer—a prayer "for peace in a world in which the risk and cost of war have become too high." But prayer needs to be linked with action and practical engagement on behalf of the marginalized and persecuted. In this respect, his text is again exemplary by counseling not mindless activism (in the service of possibly self-aggrandizing agendas), but rather engagement in response to a summons or call. Sacks at this point invokes the great biblical exhortation "*Shema Israel*," where *shema* means "to hear, to understand and to respond, to *listen* in the fullest range of senses"—to listen also and especially to the agonies of the suffering and oppressed.[23]

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[21] Connolly, *Pluralism*, p. 48.

[22] Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. viii, x-xi. As he adds at another point (p. 13): "Judaism was the first religion to wrestle with the reality of global dispersion…For almost 2,000 years, scattered throughout the world, they continued to see themselves and be seen by others as a single people—the world's first global people." Compare also my "The Dignity of Difference: A Salute to Jonathan Sacks," in *Small Wonder: Global Power and Its Discontents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 209-217.

[23] Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. viii, xi, 13, 18-19. Together with George Soros, Sacks challenges the reigning "market fundamentalism," the idea that we can leave the market entirely to its own devices. As he notes, global capitalism today is "a system of immense power, from which it has become increasingly difficult for nations to dissociate themselves" (pp. 15, 28-29). Although benefiting some segments of the population, its social effects in terms of maldistribution constitute "a scar on the face of humanity." Entering into specifics, Sacks reports that the average North American today consumes "five times more than a Mexican, ten times more than a Chinese, thirty times more than an

Religiously speaking, Sacks' account of what needs to happen is surely on solid ground. As we know, the central message of the biblical *Shema Israel* was the dual plea addressed to Jews, first, to love God or the divine with all their being, and secondly, to love their fellow-beings in an equal manner (Dt 6:5; Lk 19:18). This dual plea was taken over almost verbatim in the Christian gospels (Mt 22:37-40; Lk 10:27-28; Mk 12:29-31). Thus, Sacks in pleading for a religion of loving service speaks from the heart of at least two great faith traditions. But the biblical *Shema* is by no means alien to the Islamic tradition either. First of all, Islam does not cancel, but attempts to build upon the older foundations of Hebrew faith (including the passages in Deuteronomy and Leviticus). Secondly and still more importantly, the *Qur'an* itself resonates fully with the older biblical exhortations. Thus, Sura 3 speaks of the human love for God—a love reciprocated and even anticipated by God's love for humans; and Sura 90 speaks of inter-human love which yields the demand or duty "to free a neck (from the burden of debt and slavery), or to feed in times of famine the orphan near in relationship or the poor in distress."[24] In Hinduism, the *Bhagavad Gita* portrays eloquently the vertical relation between humans and the divine as a mode of mutual bonding, stating: "In whatever way humans love me, in that same way they find my love." This bonding, however, is instantly joined with another, more lateral connection taking the form of "consecrated" action or inter-human service: "Let your aim be the good of all (*lokasamgraha*), and thus carry on your task in life." One hardly needs to make special mention here of the central role of compassion and ethical-spiritual service in Buddhism, a tradition exhorting its followers to strive for the awakening and "liberation" of all sentient creatures "however innumerable they may be."[25]

Sacred scriptures and holy texts, of course, are dead letters unless they are taken up by real-life people and translated into appropriate action in a concrete time and place. In our own time, the concrete context is marked by globalization including global militarism and worldwide "terror wars." Given the dominant view that in politics—especially international politics—power and security always trump ethics and religion, faith-based traditions face an uphill struggle in trying to make their voices heard. Fortunately, even today there are courageous people able and willing to "speak truth (especially religious truth) to power." Among them, I want to lift up for consideration Richard Falk, well known for his work on international politics. In a recent essay on "religious resurgence" in our "era of globalization," Falk soberly but hopefully assesses the prospect of a faith-based transformation of prevailing political practices in the world. As his text makes abundantly clear, his trust is not placed in revivalist triumphalism or any paleo-Durkheimian arrangements. "In many occasions," he acknowledges, "the religious establishment of the

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Indian." While nearly one-fourth of the world's population lives beneath the poverty line, almost one billion people are malnourished and without access to medical care.

[24] *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation*, by Ahmed Ali (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 54 (Sura 3:31), 537 (Sura 90:13-16). Compare also this *Hadith*: "When the Prophet was asked which form of Islam was best, he replied: 'To feed the people and extend greetings of peace to them—be they of your acquaintance or not.'" See *Words of the Prophet Muhammad: Selections from the Hadith*, ed. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (Delhi: Al-Risala Books, 1996), p. 57.

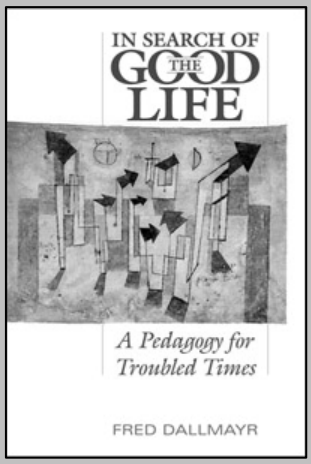
[25] See *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Juan Mascaró (London: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 56-58, 62 (Book 3:7, 20; Book 4:11). Cf. *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace*, ed. David W. Chappell (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999).

day defends the status quo, and is itself part of the oppressive social and political order." Too often, established religious institutions find the visions of reformers unsettling and disruptive and hence "tend to marginalize their impact." As against this Durkheimian model, Falk joins James and Taylor in embracing a more inward and personal mode of religiosity practiced in everyday life: "Religion is understood here as encompassing not only the teachings, beliefs, and practices of organized religious but all spiritual outlooks that interpret the meaning of life by reference to faith." In this sense, religion includes "belief in God and gods, but does not depend on theistic convictions, or for that matter, theological dogma of any kind."[26]

However, as in the case of Taylor and Ricoeur, cultivation of personal religiosity for Falk does not signal retreat into solitude but rather radiates out into the world. In an eloquent formulation which captures the gist of (what I have called) a religion of service, Falk writes: "A belief in the transformative capacities of an idea that is sustained by spiritual energy lends itself to nonviolent forms of struggle and sacrifice, thereby challenging most secular views of human history as shaped primarily by governing elites, warfare, and a command over innovative military technology." Despite certain differences of emphasis, Falk's outlook in this respect resonates fully with Jonathan Sacks' construal of religion as a response to a divine *Shema* or exhortation: the call to justice. Looking at our contemporary global situation, Falk finds abundant evidence of the need for transformative liberation from injustice or oppression. In all domains of social life today, he observes, one finds an immense concentration of privilege: the privilege of wealth, power, and expertise. To redress this imbalance is a religious and ethical demand—but one requiring sustained effort. Soberly assessed, transformation today "will occur only as the outcome of human struggle" which in this sense is "similar to past efforts to overcome slavery, colonialism, and apartheid." The greatest stumbling block for transformation resides in a renewed imperialist agenda, the attempt to erect a uniform super-Leviathan governing the world. "Only the great world religions," Falk concludes (and I full concur), "have the credibility and *legitimacy* to identify and reject the idolatry that seems to lie at the core of this project of planetary domination."[27] What surfaces here is the prospect of a new, no longer Weberian mode of legitimation—what one may call a "post-secular" legitimacy.

[26] Richard Falk, "A Worldwide Religious Resurgence in an Era of Globalization," in *Religion in International Affairs: The Return from Exile*, Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 186, 194-195.

[27] Falk, "A Worldwide Religious Resurgence," pp. 198-199, 202, 205. Cf. Falk, *Religion and Human Global Governance* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).



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—David Ingram, Professor of Philosophy, Loyola University

TRIUNITY, CREATION AND AESTHETIC RATIONALITY[1]

Michael Hanby[2]

The Trinitarian formulation of Nicaea serves to identify the self-offering of Jesus Christ and the delight the Father takes in him with the very being of God. It is in the light of this identification that we understand St. John's assertion that "God is love" as properly a claim about God, that is, a claim first about how God is in himself, and only secondarily—and at an analogical distance—a claim about how God is for us. Even so, the second claim is the basis of the first. It is only because of Christ that we can say God is Trinity, but it is because God is Trinity that we can say that it is *God* who so loved the world in Christ, because God is love before the foundation of the world.

Richard of St. Victor held that it is only due to this love, this eternal generosity, reciprocity, and shared delight between the Father, Son, Spirit that we can predicate supreme goodness of God.[3] I would add that this convertibility of divine love and divine being also implicates the other transcendentals in dynamic circumincession with one another inasmuch as the intentional *ecstasis* of one divine *persona* toward repose in the goodness of another is prompted by delight in the other's beauty, and inasmuch as this very *ecstasis* acknowledges the authority of an 'evidentiary' claim and therefore affirms the true.[4] It is precisely this internal gift and provocation among the Trinitarian *personae*, wherein each simultaneously gives to, seeks, and delights in the other, that allows us to say of the transcendentals what Augustine says of the *personae* themselves in their infinite determination to one another: "Each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one."[5]

Setting aside for now the convertibility of the transcendentals, we might follow Richard further in adding that we can only properly predicate even *divinity* of God in predicating love *essentially* of God. For a proper understanding of divinity requires an adequate conception of God's difference from the world, beyond every opposition of Being and beings, Being and non-being, or presence and absence. We can only think this difference from the world along with God's 'indifference' *to* the world; and only the fullness of love sufficient unto itself—which is to say, the simultaneity of free generosity, reciprocity, and delight—secures this freedom for thought. Of course, by 'indifference' I do not mean that unpremised *arbitrium* of late scholastic voluntarism which Descartes employs in order to

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[1] A slightly different version of this essay under the title, "Trinity, Creation, and Aesthetic Subalternation" is appearing in the forthcoming volume, *Love Alone Is Credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar as Interpreter of the Catholic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans). The author wishes to thank the editors for their permission to re-issue the essay here.

[2] Michael Hanby, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Biotechnology and Ethics at The Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family and author of *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[3] Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*, III.

[4] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI.10.12, "For in that Trinity is the supreme source of all things, and the most perfect beauty, and the most blessed delight. Those three, therefore, both seem to be mutually determined to each other and are in themselves infinite." See my "These Three Abide: Augustine and the Eschatological Non-Obsolescence of Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (Summer 2005): 340–60.

[5] Augustine, *De Trin*., VI.10.12.

launch his *epoche*. This un-trinitarian understanding severs the will from its formal object and thus leaves God undetermined with respect to his own essence. Rather by 'indifference' I mean something like what Aquinas meant when he denied that God had a real relation to the world. I mean God's freedom, coextensive with his self-determination as love, with respect to the world's existence. This difference and indifference are intrinsic to the unique relation which Judeo-Christian tradition calls creation, which establishes the world in the utter contingency of a free gift, and grounds the 'what' and 'why' of creatures in the intelligibility of a 'whyless' delight that seeks no end beyond itself, without—for all that—becoming merely arbitrary. Only with the conceptual advent of this relation and this contingency do we arrive at a genuine thinking of transcendence, beyond even the ontological difference of Being and beings or the abyssal difference between Being and nothing; and only within the ambit of this transcendence is it possible to grasp a finite incarnation of this infinite love that does not diminish or contradict it.[6] Yet the importance of this category is not restricted to theology proper. It does not leave the world unaffected. For creation renders the world as a gratuitous effect of this love and a reflection of the divine beauty.

It is, of course, the incarnation of Christ which reveals this love and recalls the world to union with it and to its own integrity. So we must insist that the Christological manifestation of God "interprets" and conditions what we may say about God's immanent triune nature. And yet it is just as true that the revelation of God's triunity interprets the economic revelation of God—and the innermost meaning of the world—in Christ.[7] ("But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth." Jn 16:13]) The Trinity allows us to see in the events of Christ's life, and creation's sacrificial 'return' to God in Christ, the unity of a love sufficient to encompass its own rejection and the emphatic affirmation of Genesis's original judgment of creation—it is good. This judgment reaffirms and restores the original beauty of creation as gift and repose despite all appearances to the contrary, or rather, precisely in an "astonishing" contrary form: "so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men" (Is 52:14).

To assert that the eternal, immanent Trinity is disclosed in the economic is to claim that the world as a whole and all of its constituents derive their innermost and decisive determination in relation to this judgment, even if they remain blind to that fact or discover it as the fulfillment of projects commenced in indifference to it. This is to say that the relation denoted by that term is not extrinsic to creatures determined to God by that relation. Just as triunity 'adds' nothing to the reality of God—for God is not a subject in relation to his own goodness, and does not have love, but *is* love—so creation from the triune God *adds* nothing to the structure of the cosmos, for it is not an event among things *in* the cosmos. Of course, this assertion is complicated by the fact that this God becomes flesh and dwells among us, but for now, let it suffice to say that if the relation of creation is intrinsic to the world, then the world is always already shot through with an intrinsic meaning that reflects this relation; a particular sort of intelligibility is part and parcel of its very structure. This means that the creation and redemption of the world—which, viewed

[6] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 125–51.

[7] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (=*ST*), I, 1, 3 and 4.

from one angle, are but two phases of a single divine 'act'—should have a real, *intrinsic* bearing on the content of our knowledge and the relationship of different branches of knowledge to each other, if we would truly know the world.

Yet the various branches of knowledge embodied institutionally in the modern university conspire to hide this relation from view. The problem here is not simply that these disciplines embody metaphysical first principles and assume corresponding models of rationality that are functionally atheistic, though this is true enough. Rather, the still deeper problem is that in rejecting the intelligibility granted to the world by the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, modernity arguably undermined the intelligibility of a fundamental precondition for *any* university and indeed for education properly so-called, Christian or not: namely, a *uni-verse*. Nietzsche, undoubtedly, would have appreciated the point, and it pertains just as much to the sciences as to philosophy. Granted, some of this is the natural result of specialization and the proper, relative autonomy of the different branches of knowledge. Yet one needn't look far in contemporary intellectual or political culture to see that any comprehensive sense of the world as an intelligible unity is now virtually extinguished.[8] The current attempt to make virtue of necessity by re-christening this fragmentation as a 'multi-versity' is an indication of the paucity of secular solutions to this puzzle.

The essay that follows will offer a roughly Thomistic conception of creation that issues in a program for a theological aesthetics more or less commensurate with Balthasar's, in both its objective and subjective dimensions.[9] I contend that the doctrine of creation is fundamentally aesthetic in character and that it issues in a corresponding conception of reason that lays greater claim to rationality than its rivals on the subjective grounds that it does greater justice to what actually occurs when we apprehend, and on the objective grounds that it does greater justice to the infinite complexity of its objects. This understanding accords priority to faith not in opposition to knowledge but as inherent within knowledge and as its genuine possibility, which is to say that it is finally only the acknowledgement of creation, and the aesthetic rationality attending it, that protects the

[8] One might counter, as does Nicholas Boyle, that any such talk of incommensurability is betrayed by the hegemony of science, the global dominance of liberal political culture, or by the forces of production and consumption, all of which are imposing an unprecedented uniformity of global culture. I do not deny such dominance, but suggest that the success of these forces depends not upon truth, but upon ontological reductionism and political power that masks the underlying incoherence, fragmentation, and disunity of thought and life. Nicholas Boyle, *Who Are We Now: Christian Humanism and the Global Market from Hegel to Heaney* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 69–93.

[9] A point of clarification is in order here. I am neither a Thomist nor a Balthasarian of the strict observance, and while I am well aware that the two are susceptible to profoundly different interpretations on such questions as the processions of persons within the Godhead, the place of beauty among the transcendentals, and the theory of cognition, I am not concerned to negotiate or mediate these differences. My point in undertaking this exercise is not to offer a definitive interpretation of either Aquinas or Balthasar, much less to attempt a synthesis of the two, but rather only to draw upon what I have learned from each of them for the sake of constructing a 'third thing' addressed to a very specific problem, namely, what it might mean within the current intellectual context to allow our understanding of the world to be intrinsically governed by an understanding of that world as creation.

scientific character of science and holds out hope for retrieving the unity of the world from the fragmentation of a post-rational culture.

The Beautiful 'Mechanics' of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

The doctrine of creation, when not downright mischaracterized by those with a stake in dismissing it, is frequently misunderstood even by those who profess it.[10] There are undoubtedly many reasons for this, and not all of them vicious, though chief among them is surely the mechanistic cosmology which has penetrated so deeply into the tacit conceptual architecture of our culture, despite its precarious position in contemporary physics.[11] Despite the displacement of this cosmology by quantum mechanics, and the changes in the meaning of 'explanation' occasioned in part by the probabilities revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, many of its most salient features—the expulsion of formal and final causality and the evacuation of the transcendentals—remain.

It is extremely difficult to make the doctrine of creation intelligible within the confines of these cosmological assumptions, for they require as their precondition that the Trinitarian God of orthodox Christian understanding had to be un-thought and forgotten, and the metaphysical grammar appropriate to Divine transcendence dismantled.[12] The subsequent

[10] Daniel Dennett's absurd likening of 'divine intervention' to a 'skyhook' comes to mind as one such malicious mischaracterization. See Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolutions and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 73–80.

[11] This precariousness, of course, depends upon one's definition of mechanism. The physicist David Bohm argued that mechanism in physics should be characterized by a) the reduction of the world to its basic elements, and b) the notion that the relationship between these elements is fundamentally *external*, a legacy of what is the *de facto* Newtonian position: that a thing is most fundamentally 'itself' in solitude, and c) that the influence of one element upon another is also external. The question of determinism is irrelevant here. He remarks, "[T]his question of determinism vs. indeterminism has little or no relationship to that of mechanism vs. non-mechanism. For the essential point of mechanism is to have a set of fundamental elements that are *external to each other* and externally related. Whether these elements obey deterministic or statistical laws does not affect the question of the mechanical nature of the basic constituents (e.g., a pinball machine or a roulette wheel that would operate according to 'laws of chance' is no less mechanical than is a machine whose behavior is completely knowable and predictable.)." See Bohm's "The Implicate Order: A New Approach to the Nature of Reality," in David L. Schindler (ed.), *Beyond Mechanism: The Universe in Recent Physics and Catholic Thought* (Lanham: University Press, 1986), 13–37, at 21. Relativity theory, says Bohm, begins to undermine these by supplanting the 'atomism' of classical physics with continually spreading fields of motion, but the real breakthrough is achieved by quantum theory, which divides motion into infinitesimal quanta and disrupts the continuity of movement in classical physics. Moreover, the environmental variation of the fundamental nature of an entity (its exhibition of wave or particle-like characteristics under different conditions of observation), further undermines the extrinsicism of the classical view. Still, if one follows David L. Schindler in defining as "methodological mechanism" theories that "abstract from the question about what material entities really are (in themselves), and restrict [themselves] rather to treating those entities as if they were just mechanical in their activity—treating them, that is, just so far as they manifest [themselves] in mechanical ways," then quantum physics is arguably no less mechanistic than classical physics. Schindler, "Introduction: The Problem of Mechanism," in *Beyond Mechanism*, 1–11, at 6; see Bohm, "The Implicate Order: a New Approach," 14–21.

[12] Simon Oliver argues that Newton's conception of matter and motion were predicated upon an

'grey ontology', which filled the vacuum left by the Cartesian and Newtonian evacuation of teleology and the transcendentals, redefined the very concepts of nature and matter, denying that wholes are more than aggregates of their independent component parts and refusing formal and qualitative attributions—the so-called 'secondary qualities'—any ontological foothold or intrinsic relation to quanta.[13] As a consequence, the now hypothetical God could only appear to view either through extrinsic 'intervention' from an irrelevant 'position' beyond the circumference of the closed universe or as the homogenous medium through which the world passes.[14] Never mind that these could never be God—as the invocations of God in the work of Descartes, More, and Newton repeatedly demonstrate—for a God who is not genuinely immanent cannot be genuinely transcendent either.

From a post-seventeenth-century viewpoint, Thomas Aquinas's so-called 'five ways' appear to be offering the sort of rationalist proofs for the existence of God characteristic of William Paley and the natural theology of the eighteenth century and their contemporary heirs in the so-called 'intelligent design' school.[15] Odd then, that in the question on creation in the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas insists that the creation of the world in time is an article of faith. "By faith alone do we hold, and by no demonstration can it be proved, that the world did not always exist. The reason for this is that the newness of the world cannot be demonstrated on the part of the world itself."[16] This claim is neither an irrational leap of faith that commences where reason leaves off nor a mere negative resignation to the transcendental limits of our knowledge. Rather the claim is rooted in a rigorous theological grammar, and it serves to protect God's transcendence and genuine otherness to creation.

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un-Trinitarian voluntarism and an Arian Christology, which aid and abet his nominalism and his conception of causality. Though Newton hoped his system would counteract what he saw as the atheistic implications of Cartesian philosophy, he and Descartes partake of similar dogmatic errors. On Newton, see Simon Oliver, "Motion According to Aquinas and Newton," *Modern Theology* 17, no. 2 (2001): 163–99 and his *God, Philosophy, and Motion* (Radical Orthodoxy) (London: Routledge, 2005), 153–82. For an account of the Cartesian un-thinking of Christian orthodoxy, see Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 134–77.

[13] 'Grey ontology' is Jean-Luc Marion's phrase, and it describes "that which 'conceals itself under an epistemological discourse' thereby 'maintaining the thing in the greyness of the object, and . . . thus bears testimony to the intoxication . . . of the ego, 'master and owner' of the world reduced to evidence" (Marion, "Descartes and Onto-Theology," in Phillip Blond [ed.], *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology* [London: Routledge, 1998], 97, n. 1). On 'extrinsicism', see David L. Schindler, "The Problem of Mechanism," in David L. Schindler, *Beyond Mechanism*, 8–10.

[14] On Newton's debt to More with regard to the *sensorium dei*, see E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (Mineola: Dover, 2003), 125–61; and Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination: From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 72–80. The latter also provides an excellent account of the conceptual and lexical transformations required for seventeenth-century literalism about God's omnipresence and omnipotence.

[15] This is not the place to address the controversy over the standard, intro-to-philosophy-textbook interpretation of Aquinas's five ways. For two accounts contesting the traditional presentation, see Eugene Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Natural Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1995), and Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (London: Blackwell, 2002), 58ff.

[16] *ST* I, 46, 2.

In Question 45 of the *prima pars*, Aquinas had distinguished creation from other modes of causality such as generation and alteration which "are less perfect and excellent."[17]

> Creation is not change except according to a certain understanding . . . For change means something should be different now than it was previously. But in creation, by which the whole substance of a thing is produced, the same thing can be taken as different now and before only according to our way of understanding, so that a thing is understood as first not existing at all, and afterwards as existing.[18]

Creation, strictly speaking, refers not to a transmutation or alteration of form effected through a chain of efficient causes, though I will argue that only creation makes such causal transactions intelligible.[19] Rather, creation refers to the gratuitous generation of being and beings from nothing. Creation in the strict sense is the passage from potency in the mind of God to actuality, which, incidentally, is what it means for Aquinas to say in the first of the so-called 'five ways' that God is the first efficient cause of motion, also defined as the reduction from potentiality to act.[20] "Since God's being is his actual understanding, creatures preexist there as held in his mind, and so, as being comprehended, do they proceed from him."[21]

Thomas's understanding of motion as the passage from potency to act does not require anything we would normally consider as movement or change from God's side. This is because God as *esse* is already pure actuality.[22] God ineffably subsists beyond the ordinary juxtaposition of motion and rest in his impassible, immutable plenitude. Thus, as David Burrell says, "Whatever is itself in act in the relevant aspect need not do anything further to become a cause."[23] In creation, properly speaking, causing an effect is construed not as a quantum of force, but simply as a non-reciprocal *relation* of the effect to the cause. As Aquinas says in Q. 45, "Creation places something in the thing created according to relation only; because what is created is not made by movement or change."[24]

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[17] *ST* I, 45, 1

[18] *ST* I, 45, 2, ad. 2.

[19] See also my "Creation Without Creationism: Toward a Theological Critique of Darwinism," *Communio* 30 (Winter 2003): 654–94, from which portions of this section are drawn.

[20] *ST* I, 2, 2 and 3.

[21] *ST* I, 19, 4.

[22] I would argue that God is *actus purus* in virtue of being infinite love; but precisely insofar as infinite love is at once active and receptive, this must be conceived not in juxtaposition to potency, but rather as containing its own potency within what is nevertheless always undiminished actuality. Hence the subsequent claim that this designation transcends the contrasting pairs.

[23] David B. Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1979), 133.

[24] *ST* I, 45, 3: " . . . For what is made by movement or by change is made from something pre-existing. And this happens, indeed, in the particular productions of some beings, but cannot happen in the production of all being by the universal cause of all beings, which is God. Hence God by creation produces without movement. Now when movement is removed from action and passion, only relation remains, as was said above (2, *ad* 2). Hence creation in the creature is only a certain relation to the Creator as the principle of its being; even as in passion, which implies movement, is implied a relation to the principle of motion."

The act of creation therefore differs in kind from all other causes. And therefore the doctrine of creation, which understands the fact of our having been created as a relation, posits no causal mechanism by which God as the active agent and creatures as passive recipients might be conjoined. Thus against both the philosophical charge of an ontotheological reduction which projects onto God an immanent causality for which God is then declared responsible, and the scientific charge that the doctrine of creation offers a flawed alternative to rival accounts of natural origins, we see instead that creation is at bottom an *apophatic*—one might even say agnostic—doctrine. It refuses to specify a causal mechanism, though this refusal should not be seen as resulting from a current state of ignorance about the totality of causal factors or from the transcendental limitations to our understanding. Rather, the negative, *apophatic* refusal to specify a causal mechanism is rooted in the positive, *kataphatic* insistence upon God's simplicity and actuality, and the nature of any 'action' resulting therefrom. Strictly speaking, there can be no mechanism for the movement from nothing to something, because prior to the movement, there is nothing upon which the mechanism might act. Causality here is simply said to have occurred whenever something genuinely *new* appears and when the activity of the novelty can be described in terms similar to those describing the primary 'agent'.[25] Since the primary agent is God, the transcendent, immutable act of being who encompasses all the similarities of creation within the ever-greater difference that he is and who surpasses our understanding by definition, this "description," of course, can proceed only by analogy insofar—a crucial qualifier—"as existence is common to all."[26]

This is no "skyhook theory" of creation, a crude and uncomprehending metaphor for divine action which likens God to a piece of stage machinery "intervening" in nature like Aphrodite to restore Paris to his bedchamber.[27] Rather, because it has no real relation to its effects, the divine action of creating—inseparable from the divine being itself—is *intrinsic* to its effects and the immanent causal processes which produce them, in the very fact of their existence and irreducible novelty.

> Now since God is very being (*ipsum esse*) by His own essence, created being (*esse creatum*) must be His proper effect; as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being . . . Therefore as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being. But *being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing . . . Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermostly*.[28]

[25] Though it remains to ask in what sense something could be genuinely new to God, given that no creature can add to his sum. See fn. 36 below.

[26] *ST* I, 4, 3.

[27] See Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 73–80.

[28] *ST* I, 8, 1, emphasis mine. "Cum autem Deus sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, oportet quod esse creatum sit proprious effectus eius; sicut ignire est proprius effectus ignis). Hunc autem effecteum causat Deus in rebus, non solum quando primo esse incipient, sed quandiu in esse conservantur); sicu

There can be no visible "mechanism" apart from the existence and activity of things themselves, for the passage from nothing to something. Creation, which is really the presence of things in God and God in things entirely dependent upon the gratuity of this presence, is thus simultaneously utterly distinct from those things, irreducible to them, and yet not neatly separable from them, since it would compromise divine transcendence to delineate, in Pelagian fashion, the respective contributions of creature and Creator in the being of the creature or its immanent causal processes. This is what it means when Burrell says that the relationship named by creation "makes its appearance within the world as we know it and yet does not express a difference within that world."[29] And it is why the newness of the world cannot be demonstrated from the world itself. The greatest 'proof' for the creation of the world is not some change within the world, or some mechanism for it, but simply the beautiful, good, and true existence of a manifold of things not God, which is to say that the doctrine of creation is less an account of *how the world came to be* than of *what the world is*, as apprehended through that tutored regard which Christians call faith, hope, and charity.[30] The movement from non-existence to existence is infinite, and thus the one motion that only God can account for. Its 'mechanism' remains inaccessible by definition.

There are both *apophatic* and *kataphatic* consequences to this understanding of creation. On the negative side of the ledger, we have seen that the doctrine of creation does not supply a mechanism for the being of the world, and it does not to provide a theory in the sense demanded by science (at least in its Newtonian conceptions). One often hears in this regard that creation simply answers a different question from that of physics, biology, and the sciences more generally: not 'why this rather than that?' but 'why something rather than nothing?' But is this so? For as Balthasar notes, the existence of the world becomes almost *more* mysterious when God is admitted than when he is denied.[31]

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lumen causatur in aere a sole quandiu aer illuminatus manet. Quandiu igitur res habet esse, tandiu oported quod Deus adsit ei, illud quod est magis intimum cuilibet, et quod *profundius omnibus inest: cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt, ut ex supra dictis pates, unde oportet quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus, et intime.*"

[29] David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1986), 20.

[30] An understanding reflected in the medieval conception of *scientia* and its coexistence with the symbolic realism contained in the bestiaries. Peter Harrison echoes Aquinas (*ST* I, 1, 10) when he writes, "Strictly, allegorical interpretation is not the wresting of multiple meanings out of words which, properly considered, are unequivocal. Multiple meanings emerge from allegorical readings of texts because the things to which the words refer have themselves further multiple references . . . When, in the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers began to dismantle this fertile and fecund system of allegorical interpretation, they were unwittingly to precipitate a dramatic change in the way in which objects in the natural world were conceived" (Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 28–29).

[31] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2004), 143. "Why in fact is there something rather than nothing? The question remains open regardless of whether one affirms or denies the existence of an absolute being. If there is no absolute being, what reason could there be that these finite, ephemeral things exist in the midst of nothing, things that could never add up to the absolute as a whole or evolve into it? But on the other hand, if there is an absolute being, and if

It seems better to say that theology *refuses* to answer even this question, just as it refuses to specify a causal 'mechanism' for the being of the world. Certainly Thomas thinks so. Following Augustine and the tradition, he insists that God, who lacks nothing, does not act for an end in creation. Implying that God could somehow gain from the existence of the world would compromise the fullness of the divine plenitude and desecrate God's transcendence, simplicity, and immutability.[32] Rather, because God as Trinity subsists in the fullness of self-giving love, we can posit no motive for creation beyond the Father's self-gift to and sheer delight in the knowledge and beauty of his Image, the Son, in whom all the perfections of being dwell in superlative splendor.[33] Insofar as God knows creation in knowing himself, creation as a reflection of this knowledge comes imbued with intrinsic intelligibility. And yet, precisely because God's love is sufficient unto itself, creation is in another sense profoundly *pointless*, possessed of a beauty and a goodness of its own, existing not as some means to an end, but only so that God may "communicate his perfection, which is his goodness," to it.[34]

In short, those qualifications that we employed to protect the genuine transcendence peculiar to the doctrine of creation, qualifications that led us to reject a causal mechanism for creation and to deny that this doctrine is a 'theory' in any conventional sense, lead us to assert that at the very heart of reality is an almost reckless gratuity, the mystery of beauty, goodness, and delight.[35] This gratuity and its transcendent self-sufficiency prevent us from 'showing' creation as a separate causal mechanism. Still, we may nevertheless claim that this movement from non-existence to existence must be intrinsic to *every* causal transaction, even those which would seem to involve merely a transmutation of form.[36]

For a causal transaction to occur, there must be a genuine *difference* between cause and effect; otherwise the result is not the production of an individuated effect which is 'other' to

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this being is sufficient unto itself, it is almost more mysterious why there should exist something else. Only a philosophy of freedom and love can account for our existence, though not unless it also interprets the essence of finite being in terms of love."

[32] "But it does not belong to the First Agent, who is agent only, to act for the acquisition of some end; he intends only to communicate his perfection, which is his goodness; while every creature intends to acquire its own perfection, which is the likeness of the divine perfection and goodness. Therefore the divine goodness is the end of all things" (*ST* I, 44, 4). See also *ST* I, 18, 4.

[33] See *ST* I, 18, 4.

[34] Concerning the convertibility of truth and love, I would want to shift the definition of truth in a Balthasarian (or perhaps Augustinian) direction such that it names *both* idea, inasmuch as the Son is *logos* or *verbum* of the Father, and a deed, insofar as this word is always already both 'spoken' by the Father, and precisely for this reason, also 'speaking' in response to the Father.

[35] On the claim that transcendence is only truly thought with *creatio ex nihilo*, and not, for instance, in various contemporary philosophical articulations of the ontological difference, see Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 125–51.

[36] This claim is not to be confused with those of the intelligent design school, that integrated systems such as the eye, being too complex for natural selection, warrant the inference of a designer. Whatever the merits of such claims, they do not yet ascend to a proper understanding of 'creation' and, without serious theological qualifications, they lend themselves to theological misunderstandings that ultimately make a finite object of God. See Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 210–16.

the cause, but simply a replication of the cause. Yet for there to be genuine *difference* in the cause and effect relationship, there must be genuine *novelty* in that relationship.[37] The existence of individuated effects cannot therefore be reduced to the sum of their antecedent causes, nor can formal wholes be reduced to the mere sum of their component parts. Effects, rather, must bear an *analogical* relationship to their causes: being simultaneously similar to and different from their antecedents in ways that cannot be accounted for simply by adding their sum. And this analogy of being obtains not only between God as cause and the world as an effect of God's creative act that variably and remotely manifests the 'traces' of its Creator, but between immanent causes and effects and between each level of their organization. Otherwise one's account of efficient causality suppresses the very difference upon which causality as such depends.

Modern physics and biology both seem to *deny* this 'ontological novelty' in principle. On this view, every transmutation of form—and it matters not which forms—is merely a rearrangement of preexisting bits effected through the conversion of energy, whose sum is constant, to entropy through work.[38] Yet this denial arguably trades on a double reduction

[37] The question here is whether and in what sense there can be any real ontological novelty inasmuch as God, containing all the perfections of created being within himself and standing in no need of creation, is not increased by it. On the traditional view, novelty is registered only with respect to us, and not to God. As Dionysius the Areopagite puts it, "In reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes are located in a realm transcending the caused . . ." Insofar as all the perfections of being and the first principles of everything subsist in the self-knowledge of God that causes them, the created world would seem merely to reflect these perfections in diminished form, neither adding nor subtracting from God, nor altering the divine knowledge. Hence it would seem that we cannot talk of novelty *simpliciter*, but only from the side of the world. There is, of course, an important sense in which theology must maintain this claim in order to articulate God's transcendence, indifference, and immutability, and I wish to reaffirm all these. Still, there is a tension here, insofar as this requires us to think of effects simply as a deficient reflection of their cause and not as genuinely additive. For this would seem to deny real novelty in immanent cases of efficient causality and to make problematic the Father's reception of Christ's offering. The issue really turns, then, on whether it is possible to ascribe receptivity, and therefore the possibility of 'surprise', to God without thereby negating the traditional affirmations of immutability, impassibility, plenitude, and simplicity. This is more than I can accomplish here, but I would suggest that Denys himself seems to have the resources to remedy the difficulty, when he conflates *eros* and *agape*, which then signifies "a capacity to effect a unity, an alliance, and a particular commingling of the Beautiful and the Good" (*DN*, 709D). It seems to me that only a rigorous articulation of the convertibility of the transcendentals with the *actus* of divine love and a recuperation of beauty as the transcendental that surprises and delights in proportion to the degree that it is grasped and 'possessed' is sufficient to extricate us from this problematic. It is then possible to ascribe an inherent 'surprise' to the divine being which is not the mark of a lack in the divine plenitude, but rather its of superlative beauty, but this then requires us to deepen our incorporation of the Father's delight in the beauty of the Son into our articulation of the logic of the Trinitarian processions, and it requires us to understand hope and faith, not as lacks to be resolved by a knowledge extrinsic to them, but rather as intrinsic to knowledge and perfected in knowledge's acquisition. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 645c. I have attempted this argument in Hanby, "These Three Abide: Augustine and the Eschatological Non-obsolescence of Faith."

[38] The first law of thermodynamics states that the "total energy of a closed and isolated system is

and suppression, first of the aforesaid difference inherent in any causal transaction, but secondly and more to the point, of the formal specificity of wholes in relation to their aggregate parts. Hence physics and biology alike decline from what things actually are in their variety in order to treat them homogenously, to "treat them, just so far as they manifest [themselves] in mechanical ways."[39] The quiddity, the actual formal and particular whatness of things in their variety, drops out of the equation altogether, along with the world itself.[40] Surely only a perverse and dangerous aesthetic could fail to see the genuine novelty, the self-transcending *more,* that *is* the rearrangement of bits.[41] In the maturation of an embryo into a person or the assembly of stones into a cathedral there intrudes a novel element denoting something real that did not previously exist: namely, a person or a cathedral, a whole composed of but transcending its component parts.[42] And this whole is possessed of a form—the why, rationale, or *logos*—that makes this collection of cells or this arrangement of stones intelligible and distinguishes it from some other arrangement in its generic, specific, and particular dimensions.[43]

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conserved; the energy of the universe, closed and isolated as it is, is constant." The second states that "the entropy [the disorder created when the energy in molecules is used, whereby no more energy can be converted into work] of an isolated system never decreases; the entropy of the universe strives to a maximum." R. A. Fisher, intellectual forefather of Richard Dawkins, reconceived the equilibrium of genetic fitness on terms analogous to these, which he called his 'Fundamental Theorem.' Notice how particular forms drop out of the equation. "It will be noticed that the Fundamental Theorem . . . bears some remarkable resemblances to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Both are properties of populations, or aggregates, *true irrespective of the nature of the units which compose them*; both are statistical laws; each requires the constant increase of a measurable quantity, in the one case the entropy of a physical system and in the other the fitness . . . of a biological population" (R. A. Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*, 2nd rev. ed. [New York: Dover, 1958], 36–37, quoted, along with the laws of thermodynamics, in David J. Depew and Bruce H. Weber, *Darwinism Evolving: Systems Dynamics and the Genealogy of Natural Selection* [Cambridge: MIT, 1997], 252–61; emphasis added).

[39] David L. Schindler, "The Problem of Mechanism," 6.

[40] Wolfgang Smith, *The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology: Contemporary Science in Light of Tradition* (Oakton: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 2004), 143.

[41] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord,* vol. I*: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 19. "In a world without beauty—even if people cannot dispense with the word and constantly have it on the tip of their tongues in order to abuse it—in a world which is perhaps not wholly without beauty, but which can no longer see or reckon with it: in such a world the good also loses its attractiveness, the self-evidence of why it must be carried out. Man stands before the good and asks himself why it must be done and not rather its alternative, evil. For this, too, is a possibility, and even the more exciting one: Why not investigate Satan's depths? In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency."

[42] "We know the very forms that subsist in the object, the very forms, in fact, that *constitute* the object. However, we must not interpret this doctrine simplistically; it does not mean that we know the object 'without residue.' On the contrary: In the very act of knowing, we know the object to be 'more' than what is given, more than we are able cognitively to possess. In a word, we perceive the object as a *transcendent* entity. The object is transcendent, moreover, not simply because it has an existence of its own, but because it conceals within itself an immensity, an unfathomable depth" (Smith, *The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology*, 62).

[43] In different terms, Margorie Grene makes a similar point with regard to evolutionary biology and

My point here is not to propose a rationalist inference from intelligible species to 'substantial form', to the forms residing in the mind of God as craftsman.[44] Rather, my point is to stress that the doctrine of creation is inextricably *aesthetic* in character, in both the objective and subjective dimensions of that term, precisely because it is inextricably *apophatic* in character. So far I have mostly stressed the negative, *apophatic* dimensions of the doctrine: the infinite difference between God and the world that surpasses any similarity between them, and by extension, what neither the doctrine of creation nor any of our scientific theorizing can properly say about God or the world. Indeed, this difference is primary, and to this extent, creation is simply another name for this unnamable difference between God and all that is not God. But if indeed God has no real relation to the world, as orthodox theology has always held, then the difference between the Father and the Son *in* God must be infinitely greater than the difference between God and the world.

Yet the *apophasis* of Christian theology, properly understood, is always a function of the determinate fullness of its positive *kataphatic* dimension. As Denys puts it, just because God is "the cause of all and as transcending all, he is rightly nameless and yet has the names of everything that is"; and Thomas follows him in insisting that those terms taken from creation which signify perfections—such as "life" and "goodness"—apply most properly to God, albeit in a fashion that exceeds our knowledge.[45] I wish now to claim that it is precisely this unspecifiable and immeasurable difference *from* God, the difference which frees *esse ipsum* from a real relation to *esse creatum*, that is the 'basis' for the analogical similarity of effects *to* God. Put differently, just as God is unfathomably and thus *apophatically* mysterious precisely as a function of the *kataphatic* fullness of his determination as gratuitous, Trinitarian love, so too is each thing inherently mysterious, as the finite effect and reflection of that same gratuity. [46] Our preceding discussion registered the *apophatic* dimension of this mystery in two ways: in the irreducibility of effects to causes and in the irreducibility of wholes to parts. Yet this very same irreducibility can be put positively, as an

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the inclinations of its current orthodoxy, made explicit by Ernst Mayr, to favor 'population' over 'typological' thinking. She asks, "this view seems to undercut the very starting-point of any biological science, including the theory of evolution. How does one tell which 'individuals' (in the everyday sense) are parts of which larger 'species-individuals' except by noticing some kind of likeness among some and not others?" (Grene, "Introduction," in Marjorie Grene [ed.], *Dimensions of Darwinism: Themes and Counter-themes in Twentieth Century Evolutionary Theory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 5).

[44] One might complain in this vein that my two examples are misleading in the manner of Paley's extrapolation from the design of a watch—which, like the cathedral, is evidently a piece of human artifice—to organic being, even if it is true that distinguishing the form of watches (and cathedrals) requires attention to purpose. Rather, my point—and it holds for both examples—is that we implicitly judge things as instances of this or that by virtue of what I am here calling their form.

[45] See *ST* I, 13, articles 3, 5, and 6. See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 596c.

[46] See *ST* I, 44, 4; 46, 1: "For he brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided; and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever."

index of beauty and an overflowing excess of determinate form, and consequently is susceptible to an innumerable range of true predications.

To talk of form is necessarily to talk of something that transcends discrete particulars. At this point, one need not make the metaphysical commitment either to static, atemporal entities in a crudely Platonic sense or even to intelligible species in Thomas' Aristotelian sense to recognize that we cannot but invoke forms and thus transcendence in talking. And inasmuch as transcendent form is encountered only in particular discrete instantiations and in punctiliar instances of time, each of which bears an analogical relationship to all others, it seems necessary at any rate to maintain that the revelation of form, like Balthasar's *gestalt*, has the character of an event comprised of, but irreducible to, its component parts.[47] It is precisely in this 'event' character that "the truth and goodness of the depths of reality itself are manifested" from within the form itself, in all its concrete specificity.[48] The 'transcendence' of particular forms is an inherent part of their immanence.

For example, earlier I suggested that it is the form of a person, a cathedral, a tree, or a game which determines these as meaningful wholes, and thus provides the why, rationale, or *logos* for designating them as such. We do not simply determine that something is a tree or a game from its material elements. While there may be a finite limit to the materials from which these can be composed, games and even trees can be composed from a vast array of materials, and other things which are not trees or games can be composed of these same materials. Moreover, the formal element of trees and games remains open to further, analogical elaborations in future encounters with trees and games yet unanticipated. So the form of a game is not reducible to its matter, and yet in apprehending its formal element—the gameness, if you will, by which we identify this game as an instance of a kind—we do not isolate any discretely definable or fully knowable feature common to all games.[49] 'Gameness', which transcends any discrete instance of game, is presupposed, even as it is concretely instantiated among games only as an analogical proportion between instances of games that is neither fully specifiable nor predictable. In unfolding the 'meaningfulness' of superficial wholes, form is inherently self-transcending, and thus inherently receptive to a vast range of predications which unveil it. It is thus simultaneously concrete and elusive, and ever more the one for being the other. It is partly in this that its radiance and beauty consist.

When Balthasar refers to the beauty of form as the "primal phenomenon," he means that this encounter, in which all the advance preparation of the subject is drawn forth into the world by the intelligible splendor of the object, is the basis of all other activity. This insight is corroborated in quite different ways by figures as diverse as Polanyi and Wittgenstein, each of whom see much tacit "stage-setting" coming to the fore in the event of meaning.[50] More

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[47] See D. C. Schindler's magnificent book, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 163–254.

[48] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* I, 118.

[49] See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), n. 66.

[50] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* I, 20. "Whoever insists that he can neither see it nor read it, or whoever cannot accept it, but rather seeks to 'break it up' critically into supposedly prior components, that person falls into the void and, what is worse, he falls into what is opposed to the true and the good." See also ibid., 26: "Our first principle must always be the indissolubility of form, and our second the fact that such form is determined by many antecedent conditions." For the 'stage-setting'

simply, some pre-scientific intuition, some apprehension of form, some latent aesthetic judgment of meaningful patterns and wholes elicited by the things of the world themselves is always a precondition of scientific inquiry into their parts.[51] As a consequence, I would concur with Hart that "subjective certitude is an irreparably defective model of knowledge; it cannot correspond to or 'adequate' a world that is gratuity rather than ground."[52] Nevertheless, my contention for this excess, this 'more' that escapes our grasp precisely in its concreteness and specificity, is not an *epistemological* or even phenomenological claim about the provisional and incomplete status of our scientific knowledge of things or their causal factors, as if improved knowledge could someday render this ignorance obsolete. This is rather an *ontological* claim about the very nature of how things must be if the world is created, and how our actions in living in the world 'assume' it to be. Why shouldn't we affirm that "I," as a meaningful whole constituted no less biologically than socially through my relationships with nature and the artifices of convention, am just as real—indeed more real—than the DNA, or the various systems, of which I am composed?[53] Why shouldn't we insist that a cathedral, precisely as a cathedral, is just as real as the stones from which it is built, which are themselves composites of elemental and particular structures? Isn't it only a perverse aesthetic, and one that would in fact be impossible to maintain in practice with any consistency, that would require me to claim otherwise?"[54]

Theological virtue and Christian faith train us to regard this excess as a reflection of the fact that each thing is always and intrinsically more than itself, and that it thus dispossesses itself of its own criterion of intelligibility, an indication of the analogical relationship of the world to God which is the watermark of creation's gratuity. To recognize this analogous character is to recognize a unity of aesthetics and teleology—not the ham-fisted teleology of Paley and the natural theologians who infer 'purpose' from every biological 'function'—but the teleology of de Lubac and the *nouvelle theologie*, who understand 'nature' as *intrinsically* ordered and constituted precisely in relation to the excess of the supernatural.[55]

To say this is not to say that this God-world relationship can be *proved*. For as we have seen, God is no cause in the ordinary sense, and on these terms there can be no way to step 'outside' of God to survey the God-world creation. Aquinas himself acknowledges this much: "this doctrine does not argue in proof of its principles, which are the articles of faith, but from them it goes on to prove something else."[56]

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this conclusion as a sort of fideistic retreat.

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necessary for the simple act of naming, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, n. 257.

[51] Julius Kovesi maintains that, in all of the terms through which we know there is a formal element, a 'why?'—strikingly similar, at least logically, to Aquinas's intelligible species—that is irreducible to the material elements out of which the objects of our knowledge are composed. Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, 7–12.

[52] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 138.

[53] After all, while I may speak of 'my DNA', my DNA cannot speak of its 'me'.

[54] For all of his ranting against the aesthetic limitations of Christian thought, isn't it really Richard Dawkins's reduction of human beings to "gigantic lumbering robots" that is aesthetically bereft? See Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 18.

[55] Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1998), 53–100.

[56] *ST* I, 1, 8.

What it suggests, rather, is an alternative conception of rationality coextensive with these ontological acknowledgments. To grasp this point is to begin to grasp how the unity of *apophasis* and *kataphasis*, the not-knowing that is theological knowing, might be integral to a genuine—indeed even properly scientific—grasp of reality. It is to begin to see how faith, along with the hope that expects gratuity, and the love that holds the world in a proper regard are both the ground and consummation of genuine knowledge. And it is to begin to grasp how only a knowledge grounded in faith may properly adequate a world whose gratuitous beauty, reflecting the beauty of God, resists being devoured by our ravenous gaze. It is to this understanding that we now turn.

Divine *Scientia* and the Order of Science

Something like this 'metaphysics of creation' underlies Thomas's remarks on the nature and order of knowledge in the very first question of the *Summa Theologiae*. Article One asks 'whether besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required?" Thomas's response recapitulates this metaphysics.

> It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science built up by human reason. Firstly, indeed, because man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason . . . But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end.[57]

Nature—and especially sentient human nature—is intrinsically ordered, completed, and even defined not by its own immanent finality and so not, ultimately, by a static and fully graspable essence, but by its relation to one who always and forever exceeds our knowledge, even as he and the meaning of everything else are revealed in the life of Christ.[58] Our discussion in the previous section considered the aesthetic character of this doctrine primarily in its objective dimensions. We can now begin to make more apparent the 'subjective' consequences of this understanding of creation and its implications by considering briefly Thomas's response to the query of article 2: whether *sacra doctrina* is knowledge (*scientia*).[59]

> We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of the intelligence, such as arithmetic, geometry and the like. There are some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science: thus the science of perspective proceeds from principles established by geometry, and music from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely the science of God and

[57] *ST* I, 1.

[58] *ST* I, 44, 4, also ad 3. The matter of 'definition' requires qualification since Aquinas insists (*ST* I, 6, 4) that a thing is good both from the divine goodness and by "the similitude of the divine goodness belonging to it," which is its own goodness.

[59] For an excellent account of Aristotelian *episteme* and Thomist *scientia*, and in what sense divine science, which is apprehended by faith, qualifies as *scientia*, see Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, 21–70.

> the blessed. Hence, just as the musician accepts on authority the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God.[60]

There is a great difference, of course between Thomas's *scientia* and modern science, which is largely indifferent to the metaphysical presuppositions inherent in its theorizing. Were we to try to mediate between them, we would have to negotiate this difference in much more rigorous terms than I can do here.[61] However, I am less concerned to recover the doctrine of subalternation in strictly Thomistic terms than to glean insights garnered from Thomas for the purpose of situating the practice of scientific inquiry within the context of a theological aesthetics commensurate with the doctrine of creation.

Thomas appropriates an Aristotelian conception of a science as that which proceeds from first principles in both propositional and real aspects, and he seems to mean by 'higher' sciences those which are actually more fundamental and thus the basis for a subsequent knowledge dependent upon and yet irreducible to this basis. One mark of a 'higher' science, in other words, is its asymmetrical relationship to those which are 'beneath' it.[62] In Aquinas's example, music, insofar as it is measured, depends upon conclusions derived from the principles of arithmetic.[63] Mathematics, by contrast, does not depend upon music in the same way. Its principles are indifferent to those of music. One might say that mathematics has no real relation to music, while the reverse is not true.

For Aquinas, the preeminent case of this asymmetry occurs, of course, in our relationship to the *scientia divina*, the principle of *sacra doctrina* and the highest science by definition. *Scientia divina* is God's own self-knowledge, disclosed 'really' in the incarnation of the Word which is *in principio* and 'propositionally' in Scripture and *sacra doctrina*, which mediate *scientia divina* to the blessed—"*Sacra doctrina est impressio divinae scientiae*." Because *scientia divina* is convertible with the divine *esse*, this claim is more than epistemological. It asserts the dependence of all truth on the intrinsic intelligibility of the divine being, "through which all our knowledge is set in order."[64] Yet what is most certain and intelligible in itself exceeds by definition the capacities of our reason and thus insinuates

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[60] *ST* I, 1, 2.

[61] With regard to Aquinas's difference from Balthasar, from whom I have taken many cues here, I would want to develop within Thomas's account the aesthetic dimension which is typically only latent in it. For a controversial attempt at this, see John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[62] We should add a distinction, however, between this order considered in an absolute sense, in which *sacra doctrina* is 'higher' than any other science, and the relative order that obtains when an inquiry is undertaken for a particular purpose.

[63] Though as Victor White notes, part of the point of the analogy is that the musician need not be a mathematician; nor conversely, is the latter a musician. Rather, inasmuch as the musician depends upon the truths of mathematics, he accepts the conclusions of the mathematician on authority—and often enough, we may assume, implicitly. Victor White, O.P., *Holy Teaching: The Idea of Theology According to St. Thomas Aquinas: A Paper Read to the Aquinas Society of London* (London: Blackfriars, 1958), 3–21.

[64] *ST* I, 1, 6, ad. 1.

a caesura between the orders of being and knowledge.[65] Hence the principles of *sacra doctrina*—such as the fact of our creation—must be apprehended by faith.

Within a modern, residually rationalist juxtaposition of reason and faith, this point is almost inevitably misunderstood, and Thomas himself is somewhat ambiguous here, sometimes treating faith simply as a defective form of knowledge, despite the claim that faith is a form of participation in the divine mind and the *via* to the first truth. Thomas's view of faith is complex, and it is not my purpose here to resolve it.[66] For my part, I would contend that if one takes the divine *scientia* and our beatific participation in it as the paradigm case for *scientia* as such, and if one recognizes the integral place of beauty as both the object and 'motive' of the inter-trinitarian *kenosis* convertible with God's *scientia* (thus noting the circumincession of all the transcendentals in the circumincession of triune love), then a conception of rationality emerges in which it is possible to maintain both a distinction between faith and knowledge *and* their coextension, so that an increase in knowledge does not eliminate faith *simpliciter*, but rather deepens and perfects it as it supplies what was otherwise lacking. There are once again both subjective and objective reasons for this. Subjectively speaking, if the *act* of faith is an act of responsive self-abandonment to another, then one's full possession of truth in the beatific vision marks the perfection of one's self-abandonment in wholehearted assent. Objectively, if 'beauty' names a mysterious excess of form that delights and thus calls forth the *ecstasis* of assent, then as knowledge of the truth that is beauty increases, so too does mystery, and so too does faith, understood as the form of our assent to this mystery. Beauty grants to both mystery and faith a positive dimension in the apprehension of truth, rather than simply treating mystery as something to be overcome as the vagaries of faith are resolved.[67] Here again, we see the coincidence of the *apophasis*

[65] *ST* I, 1, 5, ad. 1.

[66] It is true that Aquinas, speaking of our knowledge, juxtaposes faith and the activity of knowing proper to *scientia* (see II-II, 1, 5), namely *scire* (he uses *cognoscere* for those cognitions of God obtained through 'natural' reason). He insists that the *object* of faith cannot be an object of science and claims on the basis of an understanding of faith as deficient knowing that "faith and bliss are incompatible in one and the same subject." (*ST* I-II, 67, 3). Still, this faith is not merely the assent given to 'supernatural' information about God in propositional form, as it appears from a rationalist perspective, and it is not juxtaposed to an un-graced reason, sufficient to itself as its own ground. Faith, after all, is also an act of the intellect moved by the will, a divine gift and a habit, a theological virtue, and to this degree, denotes a deeper participation in the mind of God, than 'natural' reason, which even in its most elemental operations is also a participation (see *ST* I, 79, 2 and 4). Given the Aristotelian definition of a science as proceeding from first principles, which are real, unitary beings that "make both things and ideas work" by inhering in those things as forms and in the mind as intelligible species, and given that knowledge for Aquinas is a certain identity between the form and the mind, to say that we are united to the first principles of *sacra doctrina* through the habit of faith is simply to say that the intellect, while elevated, is not yet perfected through active union with the divine intellect. It is simply to note, manifestly, that we are not yet beatified. Such an interpretation might well be corroborated by *ST* I-II, 67, 3, ad 2, where Aquinas holds that "faith is the foundation inasmuch as it is knowledge: consequently when this knowledge is perfected, the foundation will be perfected also," and in his interesting claim that there was faith in the angels and in Adam in their original state (*ST* II-II, 5, 1). I develop all this in more detail with regard to Augustine in Hanby, "These Three Abide: Augustine and the Eschatological Non-Obsolescence of Faith."

[67] It seems to me that D. C. Schindler is right to insist in "Does Love Trump Reason? Towards a

and *kataphasis*, not simply because of the weakness of the intellect, but because of the inherently beautiful character of its object.

Given Aquinas's insistence that *scientia divina* sets all our knowledge in order and so is finally the key to the world's intelligibility, one must expect, on the one hand, that the refusal of faith is the refusal of something that should be apparent in some sense without faith and, on the other hand, that an account of the world offering itself as self-sufficient will be found wanting.

God, in the fullness and knowledge of his being, knows all the perfections of being, be they actual or potential. Consequently, God's self-knowledge in the generation of the Son from the Father is the origin and basis of all other truth, in both the 'hard' sense of the 'correspondence' of things to their divine archetypes, and in the derivative, 'soft' (though epistemically prior) sense of the adequacy of our minds to those things. As we have seen, though, the inherently excessive and mysterious character of form marks a caesura between these two senses of truth, making our judgments of truth dependent upon analogical, 'aesthetic' judgments of *adequatio* under the aspect of transcendentals: truth, unity, goodness, and beauty. This aesthetic character of truth is refused when faith is refused. More importantly, though, lost with it is also the *uni-verse* itself as an assemblage of analogically related motions and forms, constituted in themselves precisely as a function of their intrinsic relationship to each other and to their transcendent source.[68] In other words, the assertion of the preeminence of the *scientia divina* is not simply an extrinsicist dogmatic assertion of the juridical primacy of Christian doctrine over other fields of knowledge, but rather an ontological claim for the possibility of a single world to which our knowledge, in all its variegation, might intelligibly correspond.[69] Hence the *sacra doctrina* that issues from *scientia divina* differs from other sciences in that it does not have a discrete subject, distinct from other sciences, but rather treats the same objects as other sciences under the aspect of revelation: their relationship to God as origin and end that we recognize as creation.[70] The

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Non-possessive Concept of Knowledge" in *Love Alone Is Credible: Hans Urs von Balthasar as Interpreter of the Catholic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming) that beauty, as the mutual coinherence of the good and the true, is the objective correlate of the circumincession of intellect and will, which must be understood in more Augustinian fashion as distinct and yet intrinsically inherent in one another, such that the will also knows, the intellect desires, and each, we might say, remembers, without any losing their proper distinction and identity. For Augustine, this is eminently true of God—"Your essence knows and wills immutably, and your knowledge is and wills immutably, and your will is and knows immutably"—and analogously of us. See Augustine, *Conf*., XIII.16.19, 11.12.

[68] Oliver, "Motion According to Aquinas and Newton," 163–199. Oliver shows how after Newton, things are understood to be constituted intrinsically only in relation to themselves, and are most properly themselves in respect of their solitude. Relation becomes an extrinsic and 'accidental' category, governed by force.

[69] As Eugene Rogers puts it, "The sublation of other sciences in sacred doctrine means not only that it may use them in manuductions. It means that they are deficient until taken up into it . . . things are intelligible just as they are under God; they are not under God in virtue of their being intelligible" (Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, 51).

[70] "Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to different philosophical sciences, because it considers in each the same formal aspect, namely so far as they can be known through

subject matter of *sacra doctrina* is simply God and everything else, because only such a *scientia* is properly capable of gathering the whole world in both its quantitative and qualitative dimensions into an ordered and intelligible unity without depriving it of *either* its specific and particular differences *or* its inherently gratuitous and mysterious character. To forsake this *scientia*, as Nietzsche understood, is either to refuse the possibility of this ordered unity, "to unchain the earth from its sun," or to attempt to impose unity through the power of a science that falsifies itself and the world by exercising a reductive tyranny over its objects.

While this might tell us what it means to refuse faith in *sacra doctrina* as integral to knowledge, it tells us little as yet about what it might mean to accept it. To say first that things are constituted in relation to one who exceeds them and whose self-knowledge is the ultimate truth about them is to say that this *scientia divina* is in some sense assumed and presupposed by rational inquiry as such, even if it is not apprehended (which, of course, it cannot be) or acknowledged. To suggest how that might be so, we might momentarily take recourse to an earlier point: that all inquiry begins from an infinitely tacit, pre-scientific apprehension of formal, meaningful wholes. This apprehension is inherently aesthetic and moral as well as indicative, or rather moral and aesthetic precisely in being indicative.[71] These apprehensions fall under the aspect of unity or oneness simply in light of the fact that they are the apprehension of *wholes,* and under the true insofar as they are intelligible and indicative. They fall under the good first, to the degree that they are imbedded in intentional action and are subsumed within historic intentional activity; second, to the degree that a 'good' or 'typical' *x* is entailed in the very notion of *x*; and third, insofar as we are moved to attend to these objects by desire.[72] These apprehensions fall under the beautiful to the degree

divine revelation" (*ST* I, 1, 4). See John Montag, "Revelation: The False Legacy of Suarez," in Milbank, Ward, and Pickstock (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 38–63.

[71] "Beauty, because it is to do with harmony, fittingness, and proportion, including that between being and knowing, is at once invisible and hyper-visible for Aquinas; it is oblique and yet omnipresent. But how does Beauty mediate? First of all, insofar as Being is something which resides in itself by a kind of integrity, Beauty is apparent as the measure of that integrity; secondly, insofar as Beauty is involved in the manifestation of things in their integrity, without which there could be no visibility, it is fundamental to knowledge; and thirdly, insofar as Beauty is linked with desire (Beauty being defined by Thomas as that which pleases the sight), it is crucial to the outgoings and ecstasies of the will and the Good. This role of Beauty, although little explicitly averred to by Aquinas, is actually essential to grasping the character of his theory of understanding. For when he speaks of a proportion between Being, knowledge and willing (of the Good), and not mathematical *proportionalitas* which would denote a measurable visible ratio, it is clear that Aquinas alludes to the ineffable harmony between the *transcendentals*, whereby in the finite world they coincide and yet are distinguished. Thus Beauty shows Goodness through itself and the Good leads to the True, yet we could never look at these relations as at a measurable distance. And this sense of something immanently disclosed through something else in an unmeasurable way, but in a fashion experienced as harmonious, is precisely something aesthetic. Every judgment of truth for Aquinas is an aesthetic judgment" (John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 7–8).

[72] Alasdair MacIntyre calls these 'functional concepts', though he seems to restrict their range. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 58. See Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 65–94. The concept is implicit, less restrictively, in Augustine as well. See Augustine, *De Civitate*, XI.17,

that our intentions are elicited by the objects themselves and that the objects remain irreducible to those intentions, and insofar as such indicative judgments imply discriminations of *proportio, adequatio,* and *convenientia* in relation to the greater wholes in which the apprehended forms are a part, or the analogical determination of, instances of a kind.[73] Consequently, one can argue that our pre-scientific apprehension of those things which are to become the objects of our scientific knowledge occur under those formal aspects which are the transcendental 'properties' of being super-eminently contained and convertible with God's own self-knowledge and love, wherein essence and existence perfectly coincide, amounting to something like an intuition of the universal—and, dare we say, a participation in the divine light—in the apprehension of the particular.[74]

I would nevertheless insist upon a twofold caesura built into the very structure of knowledge as constituted in relation to *scientia divina*. First, Thomas is adamant, for reasons we have already rehearsed, that the *scientia divina*, though inherently intelligible, is unknowable to us in this life, a claim which once again warrants a return to sensible effects. Moreover this *scientia divina*, mediated discursively by *sacra doctrina*, is not simply the mysterious origin of being and knowledge, but also their last end and *telos*. And while, as Thomas says elsewhere, the last end is first in the order of intention—that is, while it is the principle of all our actions—it is last in the order of execution. It is achieved as the conclusion of a history of rightly ordered actions, through the medium of the habit of faith, and concretized in the sacramental life of the Church.[75] Thus, whereas on the one hand the constitution of things in relation to God means that God's knowledge of them is their ultimate truth and the source of our apprehension of truth, this truth, on the other hand, doubly exceeds our grasp, both by its very nature and as an end which is (for us) as yet unrealized. That is, there is a 'gap' between the truth, understood as 'correspondence' between our mind and its objects, and the constitutive truth of those objects as they are known in and issue from the *scientia divina,* where the distinction between being and knowledge vanishes. Truth in the latter sense is always more than can be captured by truth in the former sense, which means that the very objects constituted by the truth of *scientia divina* always exceed our knowledge of them, true though this knowledge may be, and

XII.1–2.

[73] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 81. "All science develops by the recognition of significant patterns, and the power to recognize them is a skill developed only through practice. There are no mathematical rules for deciding whether any configuration is a significant pattern or simply an accident. Our recognition of a significant pattern is an act of personal judgment for which there are no rules. It is a judgment of value: the pattern that represents something a human being finds meaningful in terms of intrinsic beauty or purpose. And although rules have been devised for quantifying the regularity in a series that may or may not be random, the application of these rules by the scientist to a particular case is a matter of personal judgment that depends on skills acquired by practice and is not capable of quantification or verbal definition."

[74] Though I think there are good grounds for doing so, I am not here attributing this formulation to Aquinas as I recognize that this is a controversial point that would require a greater defense than I am prepared to mount in this essay.

[75] *ST* I-II, 1, 1, ad. 1. I trust that this distinction is sufficient to protect the participatory character of human knowledge while simultaneously avoiding the conflation of the 'analogy of 'being' ' with the analogy of being, that is, a conflation of the order of logic and the order of being. See David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 112–26.

always retain an element of 'surprise' in their self-revelation. This 'gap', in other words, is both the gap of an unknowing and of faithful expectation intrinsic to our knowing, but also of an excess of form generative of a surfeit of predication—not simply for the subjective reason that faithful expectation is intrinsic to judgment, but for the objective reason that the truth of things reveals itself in the splendor of a gratuitous beauty that the things themselves cannot contain.

Contrary, then, to the perennial modern concern that the incorporation of faith into knowledge would impose dogmatic strictures on the pursuit of knowledge, we can see, rather, that it is precisely this unity of faith and knowledge and nature's intrinsic relation to God that would protect against such strictures and prevent human knowledge from reductively tyrannizing its objects. For it is precisely the doctrine of creation and the theological aesthetics attending it that insist that the truth of things is a beauty that can never finally be mastered or even fully apprehended, and indeed is not truly apprehended except in the *apophatic* knowledge of faith, hope, and love.

Creation, as an *apophatic* and aesthetic doctrine, thus provides inoculation against the disordered reductionism that ensues whenever any science arrogates to itself the mantle of 'highest science', which it will inevitably do when it fails to acknowledge a just order of knowledge issuing from *scientia divina*. It is against this backdrop that we should seek to recover Aquinas's insistence that "[*sacra doctrina*] has no concern to prove the principles of other science, but only to judge them," and that "whatsoever is found in other sciences contrary to any truth of this science, must be condemned as false."[76]

We can now see that the order Aquinas envisions between the sciences is coextensive with the understanding of creation I have tried to outline. We should understand this order, not in the sense of a univocally hierarchical order of knowledge mirroring the hierarchical dependence of all things on God. This is a sure conflation of the orders of being and logic and a violation of the *apophatic* character of creation. Rather we should understand that the irreducibly formal and aesthetic character of the created order is reflected in the irreducibility of the forms of our knowledge to each other. Indeed it is the distinction between forms, and thus between first principles, that generates the distinction in sciences for Aquinas, as it was the *esse* of God, which is formal in respect of every form, that made possible a science, through the habit of faith, of *omnia quaecumque*.

In other words, we are now prepared to say that the irreducibility of one branch of knowledge to the other, even (or perhaps especially) when they regard the same object, reflects the excessive character of the forms of composite things. This would be most especially true for Aquinas at the point where he would invoke the real distinction between a thing's being and essence. But the point holds for each level of a thing's organization, and for the greater wholes of which they themselves are parts. Each composite, existent thing is both one and many several times over; none of the ways that it is one is reducible to the ways in which it is many, and we are hard-pressed for a way to specify either this unity or this excess, except in judgments of aesthetic 'adequacy' whose ineffable measure remains hidden. We cannot *explain* a bird, much less its activity in building a nest, through the language of physics, chemistry, or mechanics—even though each of these may give us true

[76] *ST* I, 1, 6, ad. 2.

descriptions of the bird and its activity—without implicit reliance upon what are effectively formal and final causes and thus without recourse to aspects of reality that simply cannot be translated into the languages of the quantitative sciences.[77]

Similarly, drawing on Aquinas's own familiar illustration, it is not possible, as Newbigin elsewhere notes, to render an entirely 'quantitative' account of a musician's art, to account for her every movement, and the external effect of every sounded note in terms of mechanical, chemical, and electrical principles.[78] These accounts would indeed be valid, as far as they go, but they do not go far enough to attain to the level of *understanding* the music as music. It will not suffice to treat music merely as event rather than action. But the elimination of final causality is not the only deficiency in such reductions. One must also grasp the music's form, which is unfolded 'internally' by themes, tones, and note sequences, and informed 'externally' by thematic and even textual antecedents which constitute the intelligibility of this form in relation to others.[79] (One thinks of Bach's Mass in B Minor or St. John's Passion here.) All of these facets occur in the interchange between the intentions and circumstances of the composer, the performers, the circumstances surrounding the performance, and the audience's encounter with it. And yet for this reason, the 'meaning' of the music as music is not reducible to any of these facets, and is not amenable to quantitative reduction.[80] Indeed, the more fully one has understood all of these aspects of music—the

[77] I owe this example to Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 83.

[78] And examples could be compounded. Consider the question of how my DNA translates into 'me' or the neurobiological attempts to resolve the so-called mind-body problem.

[79] Recall again Balthasar's remark: "Our first principle is the irreducibility of form, and our second the fact that such form is determined by many antecedent conditions" (*Glory of the Lord* I, 26).

[80] Many critics, including David Berlinski and Michael Behe, have famously criticized Richard Dawkins's attempt to generate a computer algorithm simulating the effect of natural selection in preserving a piece of genetic code, an experiment which has spawned a rash of computer-generated genetic algorithms and endless debates over their viability. In Dawkins's version of the experiment, a computer program would sort through successive rounds of typing, saving the random characters until they achieved a Shakespearean target phrase—METHINKS IT IS LIKE A WEASEL. In Dawkins's version the experiment obviously fails because it smuggles back into its processes the design which it excluded by selecting figures one at a time as they approached the 'target phrase', but it seems to me that this line of criticism (and the counter-attempt to generate a better algorithm) misses the more fundamental point. The mere aggregation of letters is not enough to make this assemblage an intelligible phrase, much less a *Shakespearean* phrase, each of which depends on a certain intelligible form constituted partly by its antecedent conditions. First as a simile, the meaning of the phrase is intrinsically dependent on the relation between two extrinsic objects referred to, but not contained within the phrase: the antecedent to 'it' (which is a cloud) and the weasel, whose meaning is alluded to but not expressed. Its *Shakespearean* meaning within the context of the play depends not only upon the repartee between Hamlet and Polonius (*Hamlet*, act iii, scene 2), and Shakespeare's intention in placing them there, but also by a complex interchange between the director, the venue, the actors, and the audience. "Reading the text of *The Winter's Tale*, for example, makes an impression that is vastly different from the one received in seeing it performed. The meaning of the play in this case becomes different, as it would if it were played by different actors, under a different director, or even before a different audience. In short, drama presents a complex phenomenon: an overall meaning is given (which does not mean an obvious or univocal meaning), but it is not 'dropped in' simply from above. Rather, this meaning is conditioned in surprising ways by the concrete medium or media that communicate it. At the same time, these media are not scattered and formless; they are gathered into a

more one has actually heard it—the more fully one is cognizant of just how much the music by its very nature exceeds what we call understanding, and that its intelligibility is not reducible to a singular 'meaning', separate from its unfolding.

Whenever one form of knowledge elevates itself above its perspectival station to the position of *sacra doctrina*, as sciences inevitably tend to do whenever they fail to recognize a 'just order' of knowledge, the science becomes disordered. In so doing that science falsifies both itself and its object, and to just that degree, ceases to be scientific in any sense of the word. For, what the object of knowledge actually is will most certainly drop out of the equation altogether.[81] "Obliterate ontological distinctions—obliterate hierarchy—and nothing at all remains; in a word, ontological homogeneity is tantamount to non-existence . . . At the end of the physicist's analysis, what remains is not one substance, but no substance at all."[82]

It is precisely in its ability to account for the aesthetic 'whatness' and the supernatural *telos* of things—that is, the irreducible splendor and glory of things that points beyond those things in their very shimmering—that the peculiar manner of knowing that is Christian faith, and the world which it believes to be creation, can lay greater claim to rationality than its immanentist, naturalistic rivals, incoherently instantiated in a fragmented and disordered university curriculum wherein each discipline vies with the other to reduce the world to its special province. For this faith completes as the last truth about things what we inchoately perceive to be the first truth about them, and in so doing does greater justice to the nature of mundane things as *revelabilia* which are resistant, by virtue of their beauty, to the immanent closure we would impose upon them, and insistent, by virtue of this same beauty, upon the surplus of predications this faith calls forth. This faith—ordered to this revelatory glory—is therefore truer than its rivals to the ways we mundanely live, and move, and have our being. For unlike them, Christian faith does not trade on the self-contradictory suppression of purpose and form that would be obvious, had we eyes to see and ears to hear. [83]

This, I think, is how we should interpret Aquinas's remark that "[*sacra doctrina*] has no concern to prove the principles of other sciences, but only to judge them."[84] Because creation is not an event *in* the world, but rather the gratuitous event *of* the world in the splendor of its difference in unity, it does not fall to Christian theology to establish the first principles of physics or biology. Each form of knowledge, quite properly, retains a certain measure of autonomy appropriate to its specific subject matter, its perspectival location, and

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unity by the very meaning they mediate" (D. C. Schindler, *The Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 18). If the characters in Dawkins's example are supposed to serve as an analogue for genetic code, then the meaning of these characters should presumably serve as the analogue for the phenotypic trait expressed by the code. But inasmuch as the meaning of the characters is intrinsically constituted in relation to something not contained within them, one suspects that this analogy, carried through to its conclusions, leads to places Dawkins does not want to go.

[81] That is, the algorithms of natural selection, like the laws of thermodynamics or of the so-called free market, are utterly indifferent to the things they organize.

[82] Wolfgang Smith, *The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology*, 143.

[83] "What then, are living things? They are things that defy this crumbling into dust [of entropy], at least for awhile . . . ." (Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 69).

[84] *ST* I, 1, 6, ad. 2.

the ends informing the inquiry. And the academic disciplines need not fear that a deep recovery of the Christian imagination would result in any simple, fideistic judgment of their conclusions.

It does not follow from this, however, that Christian theology must be silent regarding those things about which physics or biology speak. And in a world where God's triunity is an irrelevant piece of theological arcana, a world not yet ready to hear—perhaps no longer even capable of comprehending—the doctrine of creation and its implications for knowledge and truth, the preponderance of Christian scholarly energies may be directed to exercising this critical function. Still, this is not to say that Christian faith cannot make positive contributions to scientific inquiry as well, and indeed it does fall to Christians working within scientific disciplines as well as the humanities to seek to restore the physical sciences to metaphysical integrity, and thus to account for the physical evidence—all the complications of that term notwithstanding—in manners consistent with the latent implications of a Trinitarian understanding of being as the unfolding and exchange of love, a prospect destined to transfigure the meaning of that evidence from the inside out.[85] This remains a remote practical possibility given the material, financial, and institutional impediments facing such ambitions. Yet this proposition is not at all fantastic, theoretically speaking. There is some hope with regard to physics, though the results have yet to prove satisfactory.[86] And there is ample precedent for hope in the patristic appropriation of

[85] David L. Schindler offers the work of David Bohm in physics, not as an example of "Christian physics" but of a physics that asks what are, from the Christian point of view, the right kinds of questions—and that appears to account for 'the data' as well as its rivals within an alternative framework. (Alistair McGrath makes a similar point with regard to Bohm.) As another case in point, we might return to the *a priori* Malthusianism of Richard Dawkins. Dawkins appears to take great pleasure in telling us that "during the minute it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive; others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear; others are being slowly devoured from within by rasping parasites; thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst and disease." True enough, but surely many of these and other animals are mating and caring generously, even sacrificially for their young, a fact which remains a philosophical puzzle for evolutionary theory for reasons that I cannot elaborate upon here. The point is that it is possible to accommodate this 'data' within two different registers. And it is only an *a priori*—and perverse—'aesthetic' judgment which prizes violence and scarcity over love as the context of these events. See Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*, 173, fn 51. See Alistair McGrath, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life* (London: Blackwell, 2005), 56. Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 132.

[86] Though physics, too, undoubtedly has its hubris, I find it to be much more agreeable in this regard than the more virulent strains of evolutionary biology. In particular, the controversial concept of 'emergence', which stipulates that physical principles of organization have collective origins, and that systems operate as a function of their component parts while simultaneously transcending them, seems to hold particular promise for theological dialogue. For instance, the following remarks by Robert Laughlin, Stanford professor and 1998 Nobel laureate in physics, are at least superficially congruent with the conclusions drawn by Newbigin and argued in this paper, though I would not want to overstate this congruency.

"I think primitive organizational phenomena such as weather have something of lasting importance to tell us about more complex ones, including ourselves: Their primitiveness enables us to demonstrate with certainty that they are ruled by microscopic laws but also, paradoxically, that some of their more sophisticated aspects are insensitive to the details of those laws. In other words, we are able to prove in

Neoplatonism and the medieval retrieval of Aristotle, both of which arguably served less to synthesize the language of philosophy and faith than to put the language of philosophy in the service of its true master.[87]

Perhaps most importantly, it does fall to theologically literate Christians working across the spectrum of academic disciplines to speak out when physics, biology, or any other discipline denying the finite and perspectival character of their own takes upon the infinite and begins to become *theology* as they inevitably intend to do when they deny their reliance upon metaphysics and when they fashion as a foil for themselves a 'god' who is less than the self-sufficient love revealed in the Incarnation. In revealing the divine nature as the fullness of love, the Incarnation also reveals the world as the utterly gratuitous fruit of divine generosity, possessed of a fullness of its own which ultimately defies the absolutizing claims of mechanistic or reductive explanation. I have attempted to show that all of our theorizing presupposes such fullness even as, left to our own devices, we would exclude and suppress it. The recovery of this fullness, and the faith in its generous origin, which allows us properly to grasp it, is the key to the recovery not only of the unity of the world, but also of any knowledge of it that finally deserves to be called science.

these simple cases that the organization can acquire meaning and life of its own and begin to transcend the parts from which it is made.

"What physical science thus has to tell us is that the whole being more than the sum of its parts is not merely a concept but a physical phenomenon. Nature is regulated not only by a microscopic rule base but by powerful and general principles of organization. Some of these principles are known, but the vast majority are not. New ones are being discovered all the time. At higher levels of sophistication the cause-and-effect relationships are harder to document, but there is no evidence that the hierarchical descent of law found in the primitive world is superseded by anything else. Thus if a simple physical phenomenon can become effectively independent of the more fundamental laws from which it descends, so can we. I am carbon, but I need not have been. I have a meaning transcending the atoms from which I am made" (Robert B. Laughlin, *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the Bottom Down* [New York: Basic Books, 2005], xiv–xv).

[87] See Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 125–51.

JACQUES MARITAIN ON THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

Patrick Doering[1]

This article examines Jacques Maritain's philosophical-theological theory of the consciousness of Christ in his, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*[2] and in light of his epistemological theory of poetic intuition as presented in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.[3] Fundamental to his theory is understanding the scholastic differentiation of the dual states of *viator* and *comprehensor* in Jesus Christ, His threefold knowledge, and finally Maritain's addition of his own theory of consciousness. Following these preliminary questions, we will examine two subsequent topics: the consciousness of Christ-viator and what His attending knowledge be of His divine identity, that is, Christ's own self-knowledge.

Preliminaries

According to Maritain, the knowledge and consciousness of Christ was a subject that both he and his wife Raïssa had thought about for many years. For them, the subject finally came to fruition in two "research-meetings" between Maritain and the superiors of the Little Brothers of Jesus at Toulouse, France, and was later reworked into book form.[4] Maritain divides *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus* (OGH) into two sections: the "First Approach" and the "Second Approach."[5] The First Approach is a summary investigation that Maritain later examined in greater detail and used as a foundation for the Second Approach which is about three times greater in length. Although Maritain's work follows numerous other attempts to explore the consciousness of Christ,[6] it is noteworthy that there

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[2] Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1969). Hereafter cited within the text as OGH. The original French edition is *De la grace et de l'humanité de Jésus* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967).

[3] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977). The work was originally published in 1952. Hereafter cited within the text as CI.

[4] Ralph McInerny, *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), notes that Maritain spent the final years of his life with the Little Brothers of Jesus, professing religious vows with them in 1971. The Little Brothers of Jesus were founded in 1933 and dedicated to the spiritual mission of Charles de Foucauld (196, 207).

[5] First Approach (11-43); Second Approach (47-143). Maritain always insisted that he was not a neo-Thomist but a Thomist, taking the thought of the Angelic Doctor and integrating its enduring truths as a corrective to modern errors. "*There is a Thomist philosophy; there is no neo-Thomist philosophy*. I am not trying to include the past in the present, but to maintain in the *now* the present of the eternal." Jacques Maritain, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Joseph W. Evans and Peter O'Reilly (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), 18.

[6] A few examples are Herman Schell, *Katholische Dogmatik* 3, 1 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1892); Déodat de Basly, *La christiade française* (Paris, 1927); Léon Seiller, *La psychologie humaine du Christ et l'unicité de personne*, (Rennes & Paris, 1949); Paul Galtier, *L'Unité du Christ, être...personne ...conscience* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939). For a detailed exploration of the writings prior to 1954, see A. Michel, "Jésus-Christ: Théologie du Christ," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. Bernard Loth and Albert Michel (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1958), 2: 2646-2654. See also Jean Galot, S.J., *Who*

are only three references in OGH to previous controversies over the subject.[7] It is unlikely that Maritain would have been unaware of the manifold problems earlier theologians encountered, especially in light of Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Sempiternus Rex*,[8] and the fact that many of the earlier attempts at understanding the consciousness of Christ were being made on the European stage. In some ways, the volatile nature of the topic is seen in Maritain's choice not to engage modern authors but to enter into the discussion by means of critical interaction with his distant scholastic mentor, Thomas Aquinas.

In OGH, Maritain takes issue with Aquinas's contention that the grace of Christ could not increase[9], a notion that seems to be in direct opposition to Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man".[10] The issue, according to Maritain, is that Aquinas "lacked the philosophical instrument" in his own day to recognize what modern psychology understands concerning human consciousness and growth even if this "applies in the case of Christ in a *transcendent and absolutely unique* sense."[11] Maritain further critiques Aquinas' integration of the three degrees of knowledge in Christ without considering that the degrees themselves may not have been *explicitly present in the human consciousness of Jesus* all at once.[12] For this reason, Aquinas comes into conflict with the Lukan text and finds a solution that appears to be contradictory of its plain meaning. What Maritain does in OGH is an attempt to integrate his own theory of

is Christ? A Theology of Incarnation, trans. M. Angeline Bouchard (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981), 319-343; Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2002), "Part 6: The Consciousness of Christ," 190-289; Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1976), 243-244; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 325-334.

[7] Maritain mentions Herman Diepen twice (OGH, 83-116) and clarifies according to his own theory the oft-quoted section of Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* that refers to Jesus' soul as having present at once the knowledge of all the members of his mystical body, past, present and future (OGH, 89, footnote 1).

[8] Pope Pius XII, *Sempiternus Rex Christus*, 30-31 in *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1958*, ed. Claudia Carlen (Wilmington, N.C.: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), 4: 209. In *Jesus the Christ*, Kasper writes "It is well-known that there is an interesting difference between the non-official text of the encyclical in the *Osservatore Romano* (13.9.1951, No. 212, p. 2) and the official text in the AAS 43 (1951), p. 638 (DS 3905). Whereas in the non-official text theologians are criticized for assuming, even only psychologically, a human subject in his own right in Christ, this "saltem psychologice" does not appear in the official text. Accordingly in the definitive text only Nestorianism and Adoptionism are condemned, but the question of Jesus' human self-consciousness is left open" (270, footnote 36).

[9] Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, p. 17. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 7, a. 12, obj. 3.

[10] All scripture quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

[11] Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 48-49.

[12] These distinctions will be discussed further below. The threefold knowledge of Christ is the beatific vision, infused knowledge, and experiential knowledge. For a concise explanation of this see Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch, ed. James Bastible (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), 162-168. See also St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 9-12, hereafter cited as ST.

consciousness[13] with the Thomistic teaching of the threefold knowledge of Jesus Christ, thus advancing the latter's thought in such a way while at the same time dissolving the apparent conflict with the Lukan text. While Maritain is certainly being corrective of Aquinas on this point, he affirms Aquinas' Christology in the main as both Biblical and faithful to the early Ecumenical Councils, particularly Chalcedon.

A fundamental distinction that emerges from Maritain's investigation of the consciousness of Christ is the notion that Jesus' human soul exists simultaneously under two different states, to wit, that of *comprehensor* and *viator*. This distinction is present in the scholastics, including the great Angelic Doctor.[14] Generally speaking, the state of viator is the state of man as a wayfarer, journeying to God through life (via birth), while the state of comprehensor describes the completed journey, when one beholds God in eternal life (via death). By definition, a person cannot be both viator and comprehensor at the same time, that is, he cannot be journeying towards God (as viator) if he is already present to God (as comprehensor). To say a person is comprehensor includes his enjoying the beatific vision of God—"seeing" God as he is (cf. 1 Jn 3:2). According to Maritain, when referring to Christ as comprehensor he means that Jesus "had from the creation of His soul a Vision of God that was all that which there is of the most perfect; but to this perfect Vision there was lacking a complementary perfection which is connatural to it,—the state of beatitude or of glory,—the state which Christ, the Word Incarnate, renounced from the instant that He became incarnate and was viator, as He renounced many privileges of His divinity itself."[15] Maritain slightly alters the meaning of Jesus-comprehensor from Aquinas in order to more clearly explain his own ideas. For Maritain, Jesus has the beatific vision but not the corresponding state of glory.[16] According to Maritain, the state of comprehensor would not fully govern Jesus' humanity until his death on the Cross at which time the state of viator completely ceases.[17] As viator, Jesus lives an authentic human life such that he is a journeyman like all human beings, experiencing the normal progression of human life encompassing both intellectual, personal growth and maturation. Thus, while Jesus is viator in the "here-below" of his soul during earthly life, he is simultaneously comprehensor in the

[13] I am using the word consciousness in a general sense, i.e., a subjective awareness of oneself and one's surroundings. A simple definition can be found in Stuart Sutherland, *International Dictionary of Psychology* (New York: Crossroad, 1996): "The having of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; awareness" (95). For a brief summary of modern uses and meanings for consciousness in psychology and philosophy, see K. R. Roa, "Consciousness," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. Becky Ozaki (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 183-185.

[14] St. Thomas specifically discusses Jesus as both comprehensor and viator in ST, III, q. 15, a. 10. Maritain notes that St. Thomas further explains the meaning of comprehensor in ST, I, q. 12, a. 7, in which he states that Jesus is "*perfectus comprehensor.*" In Maritain's opinion, St. Thomas' explanation is "true but expressed in an unfortunate vocabulary" because as comprehensor Jesus "saw but did not *comprehend* the divine essence (this is impossible to any creature)" (OGH, 23).

[15] Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 23.

[16] Maritain holds that Jesus has two limitations to his being comprehensor. First, he does not "comprehend" the vision of God, as no created intellect is able to do so. Second, he does not experience the connatural state of glory or beatitude. Maritain explains that this absence of beatitude is the result of a voluntary renunciation by the Word in becoming Incarnate, citing the Philippians hymn of 2.6-11. For this reason Maritain states that Jesus is not "blessed," he is comprehensor (OGH, 86).

[17] Ibid, 137-138.

heaven of his soul, a distinction made clearer once Maritain's theory of consciousness is added.

A further distinction Maritain makes is the manner in which he understands the scholastic distinction of the threefold knowledge of Jesus Christ, namely, the beatific vision, infused knowledge, and experiential knowledge. In reading through OGH, one immediately notices that Maritain devotes more of his attention to discussing the infused knowledge of Jesus than he spends on either his beatific or experiential knowledge, the latter being hardly mentioned at all. It seems this disparity has more to do with the content of each in light of the previously discussed states of Jesus' soul. Whereas the beatific vision is proper to Jesus-comprehensor and experiential knowledge is proper to Jesus-viator, infused knowledge serves as the bridge between the two. Maritain affirms that Jesus has the beatific vision from the creation of his soul, proper to the "celestial" part of his soul as comprehensor only.[18] The beatific vision in Jesus enlightens him as both comprehensor and viator, but the vision is only accessible to these states of Jesus' soul through the mediation of infused knowledge.[19] It is through the mediation of infused knowledge that the "light" of the beatific vision is transformed in such a way that it becomes accessible to the human intellect and soul of Jesus.[20] Of itself the beatific vision is too vast and inexpressible for the human intellect to "use" in making value-judgments or gaining concrete knowledge. Infused knowledge in Jesus-comprehensor is absolute and totally enlightened by the beatific vision but necessary for his created intellect to "comprehend" the beatific vision. However, as comprehensor, this knowledge remains incommunicable to and above the intellect of Jesus-viator.[21]

In Jesus-viator, infused knowledge is not total and absolute but limited according to his conceptual and experiential knowledge (which varies depending on his age and intellectual maturity). Maritain states, "The case of the infused science [i.e., knowledge] is thus, in my view, the only case where something in the here-below of the soul of Christ [as viator] was immediately ruled by His Beatific Vision, because produced by God *using the latter as instrument*."[22] Maritain clarifies that infused knowledge in the state of viator grants Jesus "… in the here-below of His soul the certitude divine by participation required by His mission as Revealer."[23]. Through the mediation of infused knowledge, the soul of Jesus-

[18] Ibid, 23. Maritain adds, "Let us note, in passing, that He was comprehensor, by reason only of an exigency proper to the hypostatic union, but that He was viator by reason of the very motive of this union, by reason of the very motive of the Incarnation [i.e., victory over sin]" (57). Later in the work, Maritain cites that even as an intra-uterine child, Jesus enjoys the beatific vision in his soul (89-90). Cf. Aquinas, ST, III, q. 9, a. 2, obj. 3.

[19] Ibid., 101-102. Cf. Aquinas, ST, III, q. 9, a. 2, obj. 1. According to St. Thomas, Jesus "compares" the information he gathers through sense experience (acquired knowledge) with what he knows through infused or beatific knowledge. He is not actually learning anything new. One can see the difficulty involved in such an affirmation. If Jesus has the totality of knowledge in the beatific vision, what purpose would there be in his having either infused or experiential knowledge?

[20] Along these lines Maritain insists that it is infused knowledge that enlightens the human mind of Jesus, making the inexpressible beatific vision expressible within his the human intellect (OGH, 119). In other words, infused knowledge makes the beatific vision "understandable" to the human faculties by using mental images and concepts (OGH, 97, 127).

[21] Ibid., 94.

[22] Ibid., 102, footnote 22.

[23] Ibid.

viator is able to indirectly participate in the beatific vision in a limited fashion. In understanding infused knowledge in Jesus in this manner, Maritain is able to maintain two aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation at once. On the human level, Jesus is epistemically truly human, that is, he learns and knows things in the same way as other men. At the same time, by virtue of the hypostatic union, he is also endowed with supernatural knowledge through infused knowledge. With Maritain's theory of consciousness, this becomes clearer.

Maritain postulates three distinct levels of consciousness common to all humanity. The first aspect of consciousness is the "*below* consciousness," which he calls "infraconsciousness."[24] Infraconsciousness encompasses all natural human functions: tendencies, instincts, sensations, latent memories, and so on. These things remain "below" the level of consciousness in that they are natural happenings in a person that occur without being directly willed by the person. Above this is a person's conscious awareness. Consciousness is "a knowledge wholly experimental and felt, which of itself is obscure and inexpressible in concepts."[25]. He further indicates that in "every man in the state of way [i.e., viator]…the functioning of human nature and of its faculties is *centered on reason*" and is limited and finite.[26] The third and final aspect of consciousness is what Maritain calls "supraconsciousness," that which is "*above* consciousness, a preconscious or supraconscious of the spirit, in which are found the agent-intellect and the sources of the intuitive activities of the spirit".[27] He further adds that supraconsciousness "functions in us only in the zone of 'the spirit in its living springs,' where the world of conscious activity has its hidden source."[28] This "intuitive activity of the spirit" and "spirit in its living springs" is a twofold reality. On the one hand, it is the place of unconscious intellectual activity and synthesis where the intellect, senses, memories, and such converge and from which rises an intellectual (and metaphysical) grasp of some deeper, greater reality, eventually blooming into conscious awareness. As we shall see shortly, this aspect of Maritain's thought is unpacked in more detail in his *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.[29] On the other hand, supraconsciousness is the sphere of communion between the human soul and God. Maritain writes, "the spiritual preconscious or supraconsciousness is not only in us the natural sphere of 'the spirit in its living springs,' it is also the secret sphere where in virtue of the supernatural gift of God is found the seat of grace, the beginning of eternal life"[30] where knowledge of divine truths emerge.

Maritain applies these three aspects of consciousness to Jesus in a slightly nuanced manner. All three aspects of consciousness are proper to Jesus-viator (as they are for any man) or what Maritain refers to as the "terrestrial" consciousness of Jesus, corresponding to

[24] Ibid., footnote 8.

[25] Ibid., 116.

[26] Ibid., 81-82.

[27] Ibid., 55.

[28] Ibid., 80.

[29] Maritain himself directs the reader of *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus* to *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* for further explanation of his theory of supraconsciousness (OGH, 49, footnote 2). Romanus Cessario offers a positive evaluation of Maritain's theory of supraconsciousness as it is applied to Christ. See his "Incarnate Wisdom and the Immediacy of Christ's Salvific Knowledge," *Congresso Tomistico Internazionale* 5 (1991): 334-40.

[30] Ibid., 49, footnote 2.

the "here-below" of his soul.[31] However, there exists a substantial difference between the supraconsciousness common to every man and the supraconsciousness particular to Jesus. Maritain refers to Jesus' supraconsciousness as also being *divinized* in the "celestial" or "heaven" of Jesus' soul[32], the place where Jesus "sees" the beatific vision as comprehensor.[33] "But when I speak of the *world of the Beatific Vision* or of the *divinized supraconsciousness* in the soul of Christ, I am speaking of a world *absolutely proper* to the soul of Christ alone…domain infinitely superior to the 'supraconsciousness of the spirit' [i.e., supraconsciousness] which forms naturally a part of that which I am calling the world of consciousness."[34] It is in the *divinized supraconsciousness* of *Jesus-comprehensor* that one can say that Jesus has divine certainty of all things past, present, and future. The divinized supraconsciousness, including infused knowledge as comprehensor, remains "beyond" or "above" the here-below consciousness of Jesus-viator. This is true because, Maritain contends, there exists a "partition" between the divinized supraconsciousness of Jesus-comprehensor and the consciousness of Jesus-viator. It is this partition between the consciousness and the divinized supraconsciousness in Jesus that all of the above-mentioned aspects of Maritain's Christological thought converge.

According to Maritain, the partition separating the two states of Jesus' soul is, in general, impassable, although there are certain instances where this is not so. The content of the divinized supraconsciousness does not descend to the here-below world of the consciousness of Jesus-viator except by means of infused knowledge related to his mission as redeemer. In the consciousness of Jesus-viator, infused knowledge, utilizing concepts and ideas experientially acquired, increases in proportion to and with Jesus' intellectual growth but does not fully reach the state of comprehensor and the divinized supraconsciousness until the moment of his death on the Cross. However, the experiential knowledge and consciousness below the sphere of separation in the here-below of Jesus' soul is able to grow toward the realm of the divinized supraconsciousness, especially in the case of Jesus' prayer. It is clear that Maritain wants to maintain the possibility of growth in Jesus-viator into the realm of Jesus-comprehensor in order to substantiate that the eternal Word, hypostatically united to a human nature, truly "experiences" a human life and death, especially in the Paschal Mystery.

In order to more fluidly understand this point we now turn our attention from Maritain's Christological theory to his earlier epistemological work *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (CI) and his attendant theory of poetic intuition. A point of clarification that can be derived from Maritain's earlier work concerns the manner in which poetic or creative intuition emerges from the unconscious of the poet, bringing into his consciousness things which were previously outside the realm of conscious awareness.[35] This point, it seems to me, is extremely important for understanding how infused knowledge comes to be known in the consciousness of Jesus-viator. Maritain's theory of poetic intuition finds its root in the

[31] Ibid., 58-59.
[32] Ibid., 56, 58-59.
[33] Ibid., 101-102.
[34] Ibid., 55.
[35] For the sake of simplicity all future references to "creative or poetic intuition" will hereafter simply be referred to as "poetic intuition."

recesses of the supraconsciousness (what he calls "preconscious of the spirit"). He writes, "In poetic intuition objective reality and subjectivity, the world and the whole of the soul, coexist inseparably. At that moment sense and sensation are brought back to the heart, blood to spirit, passion to intuition. And through the vital though nonconceptual actuation of the intellect all the powers of the soul are also actuated in their roots."[36] This intuition, which finds its origins in the supraconsciousness, "… is both creative and cognitive, can be considered especially either as creative, and therefore, with respect to the engendering of the work, or as cognitive, and therefore with respect to *what is grasped* by it."[37] While it seems that poetic intuition by name is geared towards some aspect of artistic making, Maritain indicates that poetic intuition is rather a deeper understanding of the mystery of creation (i.e., metaphysics) within the poet's soul: "Poetic intuition is directed toward concrete existence as connatural to the soul pierced by a given emotion…poetic intuition does not stop at this given existent; it goes beyond, and infinitely beyond. Precisely because it has no conceptualized object, it tends and extends to the infinite, it tends toward all the reality."[38] In an instant of poetic intuition, what occurs in the supraconsciousness of the poet is both an existential grasp of some-thing and also a metaphysical glimpse into the objective reality of the thing as it stands in relation to the Creator. "Things are not only what they are. They ceaselessly pass beyond themselves, and give more than they have, because from all sides they are permeated by the activating influx of the Prime Cause."[39]

Such knowledge, however, is not the same as a mathematical formula that can be explained and demonstrated in a cogent, explicit manner by the knower. Rather, poetic intuition is a more obscure but nevertheless real knowledge of things. Maritain writes, "Thus poetic experience is, emerging on the verge of the spiritual preconscious, a state of obscure, unexpressed and sapid knowing—the expression of which, when later on it will come about in a work, will also be sapid."[40] While it is clear that not everybody is an artist or a poet, Maritain insists that everyone has the capacity for poetic intuition because it is a natural operation of the supraconsciousness. Perhaps the reason most people fail to experience poetic intuition, Maritain suggests, is a deficiency of the metaphysical nexus. He writes that the preconscious of the spirit and poetic intuition "… tends from the very start to a kind of revelation…but to a humble revelation, virtually contained in a small lucid cloud of inescapable intuition, both of the Self of the poet and of some particular flash of reality in the God-made universe."[41] If Maritain is correct on this epistemological point, a person who is more receptive and open to the metaphysical reality of the world (which Jesus certainly would be) will be more prone to the experience of poetic intuition. When applied to Jesus, this kind of non-conceptual knowledge would be the purest instance of poetic intuition possible by a human knower into the greater reality of both the Creator and creation. Whereas Maritain holds that poetic intuition requires a great deal of openness or receptivity on the part of the poet, especially to the Creator and creation, Jesus' sinless humanity and divine person would allow for a total and complete openness to the things around him as

[36] Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, 124.
[37] Ibid., 125.
[38] Ibid., 126.
[39] Ibid., 127.
[40] Ibid., 239.
[41] Ibid., 115.

both Creator and creature!

Thus, when Maritain indicates that knowledge originating in Jesus' divinized supraconsciousness crosses the partition into the consciousness of Jesus-viator, such knowledge is doing so within the same nature and the same intellectual faculties. With this in mind, it is easier to understand that when Maritain discusses the supernatural knowledge of Jesus-viator originating in the divinized supraconsciousness, he is not advancing something completely foreign or in addition to the human nature of Jesus. When we look to Maritain's explanation of supraconsciousness in CI, we find an analogous relationship between poetic intuition in the poet and the knowledge and consciousness of Jesus-viator in *OGH*. It is in the poet's supraconsciousness where images and concepts gain further illumination and consequently reveal to the poet something deeper concerning reality. All of this occurs, of course, above the poet's conscious awareness.[42] And while this knowledge comes to be known in a non-thematic, non-explicit manner in the poet's conscious awareness, Maritain indicates that it is a real kind of knowledge which eventually is manifest externally as a creative act of art or poetry.[43]

In Christ, however, because his supraconsciousness is also being divinized by the beatific vision, the knowledge present to him in his divinized supraconsciousness is illuminated in a manner far greater than that of any instance of poetic intuition. What is clearer in the divinized supraconsciousness will also be clearer to the supraconsciousness and consciousness of Jesus-viator, although what he eventually externalizes will be but a fraction of what is present in the divinized supraconsciousness (much like it would be for a poet). Thus the non-conceptual knowledge that descends from the divinized supraconsciousness into the consciousness of Jesus would reflect the greater illumination and synthesis afforded by him having the beatific vision. However, the knowledge that Jesus has as viator would be far less explicit than the knowledge he has in his divinized supraconsciousness. The same holds true for an instance of poetic intuition in a poet. What the poet becomes conscious of is but a small part of the totality of the synthesis that has occurred in an act of poetic intuition. Referring to Jesus' divinized supraconsciousness, Maritain writes that "… the *content* of the supraconscious heaven of the soul was retained, [and] could not pass into the world of consciousness…except…by mode of general influx, and of comforting, and of participated light."[44] In the same way as the poet is consciously unaware of the fullness of an instance of poetic intuition, so too would Jesus be unaware of the fullness of an instance of poetic intuition in his divinized supraconsciousness. In both cases, however, this intuition descends into and affects what is consciously known and done by the knower. Of course, one would say that the knowledge that Jesus-viator has does not so much concern artistic or poetic creativity, although it theoretically could, inasmuch as it is one of divine creativity.

Maritain's theory of poetic intuition is directly related to and springs forth from his

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[42] Ibid., 99-100.

[43] There are other writers who also affirm this non-thematic, non-conceptual knowledge. See for example the theory of "tacit knowledge" by the philosopher of science turned epistemologist Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974). This work was originally published in 1958. See also *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966).

[44] Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 59.

theory of supraconsciousness and is of particular interest to our examination of his theory of the consciousness of Christ. His theory of poetic intuition clarifies further his theory of the divinized supraconsciousness in Jesus. While Jesus' supraconsciousness is divinized and thus has the highest possible degree of clarity, what would otherwise be a rare illumination of poetic intuition is, unimpeded by sin and illuminated by the beatific vision, an intense existential and metaphysical clarity in the supraconsciousness of Jesus-viator. While poetic intuition would function in Jesus-viator according to his limited and finite human intellect it would still operate in a manner far superior to that of any other created intellect as a result of the beatific vision and his sinless human nature. Viewing Maritain's theory of the consciousness of Christ in OGH in light of his epistemological theory of poetic intuition in CI, we are in a better position to discern the knowledge and consciousness of Jesus-viator. It is also clearer that the natural progression of Maritain's theory of the consciousness of Christ, united with his theory of poetic intuition (something he did not explicitly do), establishes Jesus as *the foremost poet* (something Maritain's wife Raïssa would certainly have appreciated!).

Possibilities for Christology: The Consciousness of Jesus-Viator

Although the previous examination of the scholastic background of Maritain's theory is detailed, I believe that he is trying to safeguard Jesus' humanity from becoming, as he states, a "fairy-story marvel which is unworthy of Christ and contrary to the *verus homo*."[45] Two further citations elucidate Maritain's thoughts on this point. He writes, "…being given the central importance of the humanity of Christ in contemplation and the contemplative life, a new synthesis concerning this humanity,—a Thomist synthesis in its principles and its spirit, but freed of accidental obstacles due to the mentality of an epoch, and recognizing that *movement of growth*, not only as to the body but as to the things of the soul and of the spirit, is essential to every *true man*,—such a new synthesis seems entirely necessary.[46] Maritain undertakes this new synthesis with the aid of a more sophisticated psychology than what Aquinas and the scholastics had available to them: "Once we are in possession of this philosophical instrument, this explicit and systematic notion of the divinized supraconsciousness of the spirit, it seems to me, not, indeed, that the difficulties cease, but that they become more approachable, that the image which we have of the humanity of Christ becomes more really human, and that place is made in this image (at the level below that of the divinized supraconscious) for the movement, the development, the progress, without which man is not truly man. Christ was not *purus homo*; but he was *verus homo*."[47] This brings us to the particular question of the conscious self-knowledge of Jesus-viator in Maritain's thought. While it is true that Maritain discusses other things that Jesus-viator is consciously aware of with divine certainty (e.g., his mission to reveal the truth of the Father's love and his role as Savior and Redeemer), both of these spring from the central reality of the knowledge and consciousness Jesus had of himself.[48]

Addressing the self-knowledge of Jesus in Maritain's thought we must begin with the

[45] Ibid., 19.
[46] Ibid., 47-48.
[47] Ibid., 50.
[48] Ibid., 104, 111-114.

statement: "Insofar as comprehensor, He [Jesus] knew Himself God through the Vision, *in seeing the divine essence and His own divine Person and the Father with whom He is one*."[49] For this reason, we can proffer that, in his divinized supraconsciousness, Jesus is explicitly aware of himself as a divine person, one of the Blessed Trinity. This knowledge is divinely certain because what is being presented to the intellect of Jesus-comprehensor is concurrently being seen in the beatific vision.[50] It is important to understand Maritain on this point because the knowledge of Jesus-viator (the here-below of his soul) originates in and corresponds to the knowledge that is present in the divinized supraconsciousness of Jesus-comprehensor (the heaven of his soul). Maritain indicates that although one of the modes through which Jesus-viator knows himself is the non-conceptual knowledge originating in his divinized supraconsciousness, this knowledge does not have the same degree of certainty as it does in the higher realm of its origin. Nonetheless, "the *consciousness that Jesus had of His own divinity*...developed very quickly in the course of His childhood."[51] Further, "The consciousness that Jesus had of His divinity was to be much higher still at the time of the Last Supper and of the appearance before Caiphas. What I mean is that at twelve years of age, before the Doctors, He had already, with the full consciousness of His divinity, a science of the divine things more perfect and more ample than that of any man here on earth."[52] We can identify two key points here. First, because his knowledge and consciousness are rooted in his divinized supraconsciousness, Jesus is conscious of his own divinity just as perfectly as the intellectual capacities of his age allow. Second, this knowledge is not complete at the age of twelve, but with the addition of more and more acquired knowledge and intellectual maturity, is greater at the end of his ministry than it was when he was found earlier in the Temple. In other words, as Jesus experiences more and more things and grows into manhood, so too would his intellect grow in its understanding of that which originates in his supraconsciousness, divinized by the beatific vision.

It seems that Maritain includes infused knowledge in his discussion of the consciousness of Jesus as the bridge between the divinized supraconsciousness and consciousness of Jesus, operating tantamount to or with "poetic intuition" in his intellect. Maritain certainly holds that Jesus acquired knowledge that reaches unsurpassable synthesis and clarity in his divinized supraconsciousness. However, his description of infused knowledge does little to add to what he has already said concerning the consciousness of Jesus, with the exception of enabling him to state directly that infused knowledge gives Jesus "divinely sovereign certitude, *that He was* the Word Incarnate, essentially one with the Father."[53] It seems that the traditional role of infused knowledge presenting truths to the mind with divine certainty could easily be replaced by Maritain's notion of poetic intuition.

So why is it important for Maritain to state that Jesus has confirmation of his divine identity through infused knowledge when he has already substantiated something very similar with his theory of poetic intuition? By including the scholastic understanding of infused knowledge in his theory of the consciousness of Christ, Maritain is able to affirm

[49] Ibid., 107.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 119.
[52] Ibid., 120, footnote 75.
[53] Ibid., 108.

Jesus' knowledge of himself both implicitly (through an instance of poetic intuition) and explicitly (through infused knowledge). It also allows him to faithfully adhere to a fundamental part of the scholastic thesis of the threefold knowledge in Jesus Christ. A more detailed application of his theory of poetic intuition to his theory of Jesus' divinized supraconsciousness would have served to make his theory much clearer and perhaps stronger than it appears in OGH. By my lights, this is a forgivable oversight more so than a purposeful omission by this renowned Thomist. Although it is regrettable that Maritain did not pursue this aspect of his theory more explicitly, his theory of the divinized supraconsciousness and consciousness of Jesus Christ is certainly an important contribution to the question of the consciousness of Christ.

Jesus' Self-Knowledge

It is fitting to conclude this survey of Maritain's Christological theory by uniting various aspects of the consciousness of Christ and further elucidating what Maritain believes Jesus would have been consciously aware of concerning himself—his self knowledge. In the realm of the divinized supraconsciousness in the heaven of the soul of Jesus, the knowledge that he has of himself as being a divine person subsisting in a human nature is absolute. For this reason Maritain, following Aquinas, contends that Jesus does not have the virtue of faith.[54] He writes, "Not having theological faith, it is through the *evidence*,—but *participated*—of the *science of Beatific Vision* that the infused science of Christ caused Him to know the divine things,—His own divinity, His own procession from the Father, His Incarnation, His redemptive Mission, the unity in nature of the three divine Persons, the procession of the Holy Spirit, in short, all the divine Inaccessible which he had to reveal, 'tell' to men."[55] Shortly thereafter, he adds that "Insofar as comprehensor, He knew Himself God through the Vision, *in seeing the divine essence and His own divine Person and the Father with whom He is one*."[56]

But how does this absolute knowledge of himself find its way into the here-below of the soul of Jesus-viator? In the consciousness and here-below of the soul of Jesus, Maritain believes that Jesus' knowledge of his divine identity would have emerged rather quickly and begun the moment he was aware of himself as an individual being in the world. He does not restrict his theory to an explanation of the intellectual knowledge of Jesus-viator only. Rather, he devotes a special section to Jesus' consciousness understood in a much broader sense. Maritain first clarifies that consciousness amounts to two kinds of knowledge of self. The intellectual knowledge that we have of ourselves is not the same as our conscious self awareness. Intellectual knowledge of the self occurs by reflecting back on previous action. Consciousness, however, is "*experimental* and *perceived* (by reversion on acts); this is an *obscure* knowledge and which of itself is inexpressible in concepts."[57] Maritain clarifies by way of an example. He notes that before he had formed the *conceptual* knowledge of being a man he already had the "obscurely perceived content of the consciousness"[58] of being a

[54] See Aquinas, ST, III, q. 7, a. 3.
[55] Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 104.
[56] Ibid., 107.
[57] Ibid., 115.
[58] Ibid.

man. Through a later reflection on this obscure knowledge, the agent-intellect presents to the intellect the concept of the self *acting* as a man. So, while a child may not be able to intellectually identify himself as being human, an individual person acting in the world, etc., his lived, conscious experience is just that. Maritain then applies this to Jesus. He notes that, along with this "obscure and inexpressible" knowledge of himself, Jesus would also experience himself "through the lived experience of His absolute impeccability, of His faultless wisdom, as also through the ineffable memory of that which He had experienced in prayer,—He had consciousness of the fact that He transcended the human condition, and that there was in Him something divine."[59] In other words, in his daily *action* Jesus would humanly live out his divinity without necessarily being explicitly conscious of it at all times. Being *consciously* aware of being God is not necessarily the same as being *intellectually* aware of being God, just as being consciously aware that I am human is not the same as being intellectually aware that I am human. This would, of course, apply to the pre-cognitive Christ child.

However, by the time Jesus reached the age of twelve and was found in the Temple by the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph (Lk 2:41-52), Jesus "…was in full possession, even conceptual, of His knowledge of the things of God, and of His consciousness of Himself as God."[60] Maritain here addresses the here-below consciousness of Jesus on this point:

> I have already noted that the knowledge through infused science that Jesus had of His own divinity developed during the childhood of Jesus probably very quickly. This is to say that the *consciousness that Jesus had of His own divinity* also developed very quickly in the course of His childhood. And if this was so, it is not only owing to the natural intuitivity proper to the child, it is also for a more profound reason, because it is entirely unthinkable that the fact of *being God* should have one day irrupted into the consciousness of an adolescent who up to that moment would have had consciousness of Himself without being yet informed of such a fact, while on the other hand the idea of God would have already taken form in Him. He would have been simply crushed by such a revelation (before which, besides, He would have taken Himself for a mere man, and,—another impossibility in that which concerns Christ,—would have to that extent been in error).[61]

Maritain states that Jesus' awareness of his divine identity in his human consciousness originates in his awareness of himself being a *divine person*: "all His human activity, including that of His free will, was the instrument of the divine Word…just as our activity is the instrument of our created person…and the human consciousness of Jesus held the Word as His own *I* just as our consciousness holds our created person to be our own *I*,"[62] adding that, "He had thus…*consciousness* of Himself as of a *divine person*, He had consciousness

[59] Ibid., 116.
[60] Ibid., 120.
[61] Ibid., 118-119.
[62] Ibid., 116, footnote 2.

of being the Word Incarnate."[63] While Jesus experiences the same human limitations as any other man, his human nature is nonetheless hypostatically united to the divine Word and thus has certain unique privileges. The beatific vision is the most obvious privilege granted to the humanity of Jesus. According to Maritain's theory, however, as a result of the beatific vision and infused knowledge, at any given point in Jesus' life, from birth to death, his humanity would have had *the fullness of knowledge and grace possible* at that point in his life. As a twelve-year-old adolescent, Jesus would have had the fullness of grace and knowledge appropriate to a twelve year old and, as a result, a concurrent consciousness of himself. Thus also at fifteen, twenty, and thirty three.

With this clarification in mind, Maritain writes that, "The knowledge that Christ, insofar as viator, had of His divinity and of His mission and of the other supernatural truths hidden in the glory of God, was the highest knowledge possible of infused science."[64] Since he has already stated that the infused knowledge of Jesus-viator operates according to his intellectual capacities proper to his given stage or state in his life, Maritain leaves open the possibility of genuine growth in Jesus, including his conscious knowledge of himself.[65] "What seems to me, in any case," Maritain contends, "is that it [Jesus' self knowledge] had already attained its point of perfect maturity at the time when He remained in the Temple"[66] adding immediately after that, "The consciousness that Jesus had of His divinity was to be much higher still at the time of the Last Supper and of the appearance before Caiphas. What I mean is that at twelve years of age, before the Doctors, He had already, with the full consciousness of His divinity, a science of the divine things more perfect and more ample that that of any man here on earth."[67] Maritain indicates that the level of perfection increases in proportion to the experience and intellectual maturity of Jesus' intellect and self consciousness: "In fact, He [Jesus] knew certainly, and in the most perfect manner, His divinity though the Beatific Vision, but the Vision was shut up in the supraconscious paradise of His soul…It is on the infused science, itself participating in the evidence of the Vision, that depends this knowledge that Christ as viator had of His divinity."[68]

Maritain's theory of the multi-faceted world of consciousness in Jesus enables him to maintain that, while Jesus-viator is aware of his divine identity in his human consciousness, that awareness is still finite and limited (in proportion to the capacity of his human nature at a particular age) and is thus able to increase over time. As has already been stated, this does not mean that at any given time during his early life Jesus was not aware of his divine identity. Rather, it affirms genuine human growth in Jesus' self conscious. This increase comes to full fruition when, dying on the Cross, the here-below consciousness of Jesus-

[63] Ibid., 117.

[64] Ibid., 114.

[65] While Maritain maintains that Jesus continues to grow in knowledge of himself throughout his earthly life, this must be seen in the context of his overall understanding of the dual states of Jesus' soul and his threefold knowledge. Nonetheless, the idea that Jesus could grow in an awareness of himself with age (as all humans do), even in the knowledge of his divine identity, shows the depths of Maritain's Christology. Such a dynamic understanding of human nature is certainly more realistic than one that does not allow growth or change, a rather "flat" view of human nature.

[66] Op. cit., 120.

[67] Ibid., footnote 75.

[68] Ibid., 107.

viator gives way to the divinized supraconsciousness of Jesus-comprehensor (thus abolishing the "partition" between the two).[69] This brings to an end the possibility of growth in Jesus' human nature, as it would for you or me.

Conclusion

Although Maritain's *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus* has gone largely unnoticed by theologians, the addition of his theory of consciousness, specifically supraconsciousness, to the scholastic understanding of the threefold knowledge of Christ and the dual states of his soul offers a real possibility for deepening our understanding of the genuine humanity of Jesus. Maritain's theory of the consciousness of Christ affirms the scholastic theory of the threefold knowledge of Jesus in its essentials while carrying it further with the aid of his philosophical psychology. By proposing that Jesus' supraconsciousness is divinized by the beatific vision, Maritain has found a means of expressing the reality of supernatural knowledge in Jesus' humanity while maintaining a genuine humanity. To grow in knowledge is a characteristic of everyone who is truly human and so must also be true for Jesus. Stated another way, Maritain's theory allows for true intellectual and personal growth in Jesus while also affirming his possession of divinely-certain knowledge, especially concerning his divine identity. Maritain's contribution to Christology, then, is his application of the theory of the divinized supraconsciousness and its interaction with the consciousness of Jesus. While affirming an absolute and perfect knowledge in the former, the heart of Maritain's theory lies in the latter. That Jesus experiences authentic intellectual and conscious development is fundamental to his being genuinely human. In his explanation of the impact of the divinized supraconsciousness on the knowledge and consciousness of Jesus-*viator*, Maritain is able to affirm that Jesus' knowledge of the world and of himself is ***certain*** knowledge, though it is not ***absolute*** knowledge—meaning it is able to increase and to grow as Jesus' intellect increases and matures with age. All this being true, Jesus' knowledge of his divinity does not diminish his humanity but, according to Maritain, makes it possible for "the image we have of the humanity of Christ" to become "more really human."[70] Maritain leaves us contemplating a Jesus who, "though he was in the form of God…emptied himself" (Phil 2:6-7) and truly entered into solidarity with our human condition.

[69] Ibid., 137-138.
[70] Ibid., 50.

DEVELOPING A RETROACTIVE HERMENEUTIC: JOHANNINE THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

Myk Habets[1]

I. A Retroactive Hermeneutic[2]

The role of the Holy Spirit has long been a neglected factor in contemporary hermeneutics. Major textbooks on biblical interpretation fail to address the role of the Holy Spirit, simply allude to pneumatology, or at best, offer one- or two-page summaries. Most biblical interpreters, however, intuitively grasp the significance of the Holy Spirit in the process of interpretation but struggle to articulate it. The present work contributes a partial articulation of the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation and, in turn, doctrinal development, by adopting a retroactive hermeneutic.[3] A retroactive hermeneutic recognizes that the experienced presence of Christ in the Spirit, post-Easter, brought to mind the life of Jesus; thereby reawakening remembrances of his life, words, and deeds. In this sense, the present and the past correspond such that the present does not contradict the past, nor vice-versa. This same retroactive process is available for the exegete today.

We see this retroactive hermeneutic clearly illustrated in the Johannine literature. John brings the dialectic between the historical words of Christ (Gospel) and the present experience of the Spirit into sharp focus.[4] In Jn 14:26 and 16:12ff, the other (*allos*) *Paraclete* fulfils two functions. The first is to continue the ministry of revelation already given: "he will

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[2] I wish to thank Peter McGhee, Dr. Tim Meadowcroft, Professor Ray S. Anderson, and the members of Café Theos for useful comments on earlier drafts.

[3] Advocating much the same idea as presented here is R. S. Anderson who labels his a christological hermeneutic, *Ministry on the Fire Line: A Practical Theology for an Empowered Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 111; R. S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 134-135; and *Dancing with Wolves While Feeding the Sheep: The Musings of a Maverick Theologian* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), chapter 3, where it is described as a hermeneutic of "eschatological preference." Another close example is the "christotelic" hermeneutic being developed by P. Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). This merely highlights the reciprocity between Christ and Spirit. See F. H. Klooster, "Role of the Holy Spirit in the Hermeneutic Process: The Relationship of the Spirit's Illumination to Biblical Interpretation," *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed., E. D. Radmacher & R.D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 453, who prefers "the pneumatically christological theocentric" motif.

[4] J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 351. Cf. the similar theme in Paul, 2 Cor. 1:22, and Rom, 8:23, and 1 Peter 1:12. See John Calvin's comments in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1.7.4. We also see evidence of this in Hebrews where the Holy Spirit takes on an unmediated oratorical function (cf. Heb 3:7-11; 9:6-10; 10:15-17). See M. Emmrich, "*Pneuma* in Hebrews: Prophet and Interpreter," *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2002), 55-71. Emmrich points out parallels in other texts which include: Eph 1:17 1 Cor 2:15; and 1 Jn 2:27 which we comment on below.

teach you everything," and secondly, to "remind you of all that I [Jesus] have said to you." Hence, the new illumination has the continual ministry of the original revelation: "he will guide you into all truth" is balanced by "He will not speak on his own" (16:13). And again "he will declare (*anangelei*) to you the things that are to come," (16:13, cf. 16:15) is balanced by, "he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (16:14). The key word or concept here is *anangelei*, for it can have the force of *re*-announce or *re*-proclaim. The force of the action is understood by Jn 16:13 to include some further information or meaning.[5] That further meaning is in effect drawn out of the old by way of reinterpretation.[6] Consequently, this word presents both inspiration in the present and interpretation of the past as bound up in the framework of illumination.[7] What this interpretive work of the Spirit meant for John is that he would undoubtedly regard his own gospel as the product of this inspiring Spirit. His own work was in direct fulfillment of these very promises; in fact those promises may constitute an implicit *apologia* for his gospel.[8] Dunn writes, "the way in which John handles the words and deeds of the historical Jesus is typically the way in which the Spirit interprets Jesus to a new generation, guides them into the truth of Jesus."[9]

In 1 Jn 2:27 the same thought is expressed in the following: "the anointing (that is, the Spirit) abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you…his anointing teaches you about all things," and thus the prophecy of Jer 31:34 is fulfilled. But the parallel in 1 Jn 2:27 implies that the Spirit's teaching is actually a continual reinterpretation of the original message of faith.[10] Again, in 1 Jn 4:2-6, present inspiration is expected and known, but a right understanding of Jesus is normative. Finally, in 1 Jn 5:6-12, we see this same dialectic between the remembrance of the life of Christ (*kerygma*) and the present communicative role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit testifies to the truth of the humanity of Christ (v. 6-7), and the Spirit continues to bear testimony to the anti-docetic *kerygma* (v. 9-10). The last book of the canon, Revelation, also points to this forward orientation or development as the Spirit catches John of the Apocalypse up and is commanded to write down what he sees and hears and what is to come (Rev 1:10,19). This is, of course, a natural extension. For in the Gospel of John, the Spirit cannot come until Christ is ascended (Jn 14:12). Again in Revelation we read, "let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying (*legei,* present tense) to the

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[5] Commenting on Jn 16:13 Leslie Newbigin writes, "To the Church, however, the work of the Spirit will be "to declare the things that are to come," to interpret coming events, *to be the hermeneutic of the world's continuing history,"* in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 78 (italics mine).

[6] On the retroactive perspective of John see M. M. Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 123-128. Thompson uses the term "retrospective" but means the same as our "retroactive (125).

[7] See the same conclusions in S.E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Mal, MA.: Blackwell, 1998), 99-100.

[8] What is true of John is also shared by the other evangelists. For example, Matthew 13:52 echoes this thought when it relates the teaching of Jesus about the bringing forth of old and new together; the one informing the other, the one anticipating and the other unfolding and unpacking as well as revealing new thoughts and concepts.

[9] J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 352ff.

[10] On the Spirit's role as biblical interpreter see D. McCartney and C. Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton: Victor, 1994), 75-80.

churches" (Rev 2:7). The canonical authors are consciously writing to and for Spirit-inspired readers.[11]

This last point has been recognized by Markus Bockmuehl and forms the fifth thesis of his proposals for New Testament scholarship.[12] He writes, "The implied reader is drawn into an act of reading that involves playing an active role on stage rather than the discreet spectator on the upper balcony."[13] It is the Spirit of Light who illuminates the significance of the Christ event (*retro*); it is the presence of the Spirit of Life that moves the church on (*active*); and it is the Spirit of Truth who brings the word of God into new situations (*retroactive*).[14] The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the one who moves the Church through history. We see this vividly in Acts, as we see the Spirit enabling the Church to make radical counter-cultural innovations in its missionary activity, encapsulated in Acts 15:28: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."[15]

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[11] In this sense the neo-orthodox and existentialist schools are correct in realizing that the moment of understanding is at once the moment of response. The words of Scripture in this sense do *become* the Word of God. In the words of Barth, "revelation *is* reconciliation." According to Barth "Revelation takes place in and with reconciliation; indeed, the latter is also revelation. As God acts in it he also speaks…Yet the relationship is indissoluble from the other side as well. Revelation takes place as the revelation of reconciliation" (*CD* IV/3, 8), cited in G. Hunsinger, "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth,* ed. J. Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 137. Following Barth the other major presentation of this theology has been by T. F. Torrance, especially in his work *The Mediation of Christ,* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

[12] M. Bockmuehl, "To Be Or Not To Be": The Possible Futures of New Testament Scholarship," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 no. 3 (1998), 271-306.

[13] Ibid., 300. In addition to the already mentioned verses in the Johannine corpus, Bockmuehl includes the following: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is (kaqwß ejstin ajlhqwß), the word of God, which is at work (*energeitai*) in you believers" (1 Thess 2:13). Finally, "And I am with you everyday (pasaß taß hJmeraß) until the conclusion of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

This is similar to the approach advocated by T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 37, who borrows an idea from W. Manson in which we must *indwell* the New Testament as a whole in such a way as to look *through* the various books and passages of Scripture and allow the message to be interiorized in the depths of our mind. For this reason his approach is called "depth exegesis." He also draws heavily from the work of Michael Polanyi, see *Belief in Science and in Christian Life: The Relevance of Michael Polanyi's Thought for Christian Faith and Life,* ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1980).

[14] This terminology has been used by P. J. Rosato, "Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise." *Theological Studies* 38 no. 3 (1977), 444. Anderson, *Ministry on the Fire Line,* 35ff speaks of theology as being both historical (backward or retro) and contemporary (future or active) due to Christ and the Spirit.

[15] R. Brown describes this as "interpreting in relation to each coming generation the contemporary significance of what Jesus has said and done," *The Gospel According to John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 2:716. Also see the similar hermeneutical insights of R. S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 29-30. He speaks of theological innovation not unrelated to theological antecedent or precedent. In this way he achieves what I have labeled a

This retroactive motif parallels to some degree what Anthony Thiselton has been writing about for some time—the so-called *two horizons*.[16] The first horizon is the text and its world and equates to our *retro*. The second horizon is that of the reader and their world and equates to our *active*. In the words of Stephen Fowl: "The Spirit's role is to guide and direct this process of continual change in order to enable communities of Christians to 'abide in the true vine' in the various contexts in which they find themselves…Because the Spirit speaks this 'more' in unison with the Father and the Son, believers can act in ways that are both 'new' and in continuity with the will of God."[17]

Traditional scholarship has been good at working in the first horizon—that of the text. However, if one spends one's life looking backward then bruises are sure to form on the head! While retrospection is crucial, it cannot be the totality of biblical hermeneutics. We need to spend more time, Clark Pinnock and others argue, in the world of the second horizon—with how the text is to be interpreted and applied today—and this refers to the *active* element of interpretation which relies on the Holy Spirit.[18] And it is here that much recent Pentecostal scholarship has been contributing. As Pinnock writes in relation to contemporary Evangelical thought on the issue:

> The Spirit's goal in the illumination of the Word for the Church is to shed light on her pilgrim way…Here [Acts 15:28] the Spirit led the community to an important corporate decision, not insight into the faith so much as insight into the mission. The Spirit was guiding the Church to move beyond the confines of Judaism and learn to adapt to a mission among Gentiles. All through Acts the ministry of the Spirit is to direct believers in what to think and where to go.[19]

Pinnock adds that,

> Evangelical theology has to be a 'pilgrim theology.' We never pass beyond the necessity of reconsidering our traditional interpretations until the return of Christ. We continually ask where the deep structures of Biblical revelation are pointing. A theology that is not restlessly probing and exploring is not serving the Church well. A theology that takes the path of discovery requires the Spirit's illumination most urgently.[20]

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retroactive hermeneutic. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 99-100 provides two examples from the Gospel of John where this "remembering" in a theological way (retroactive reading) is evidenced, in Jn 2:22 and 12:16. Fowl goes on to use the convincing and rather helpful historical case-study of Acts 10-15.

[16] A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

[17] Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 101.

[18] See C. H. Pinnock, "The Role of the Spirit in Interpretation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 no. 4 (1993), 491-497.

[19] Ibid., 495.

[20] Ibid., 496. Pinnock has put this theory into practice in his recent theological works. A very good example is his constructive proposals for pneumatology in *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996). An example which has occasioned much critique is his constructive proposals for theology proper and christology/soteriology as developed in C. H. Pinnock,

It appears that Pentecostals and Evangelicals together are working towards just such a "pilgrim theology." The current essay is a further attempt in this direction.

II. The Exegete and the Spirit

Having established a retroactive hermeneutic that accounts for the mission of the Holy Spirit, we are left with the task of briefly pointing out some of the implications of a pneumatological hermeneutic for the biblical exegete.

There are generally two approaches to the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation. One focuses on what the Spirit does with the *text,* the other on what the Spirit does with the *exegete*.[21] The first approach, while becoming a popular option in contemporary hermeneutics, is rejected by a retroactive reading of Scripture.[22] Proponents of the first approach aver that the Spirit enables the text to be read in a way which would not have been obvious to the first recipients (a "Spiritual" reading) and so in this way renders Scripture of continuing relevance to the Church. On this view the Spirit is the creative power behind the fusion of the text's and the reader's horizons, with the second horizon exerting a clear dominance over the first. The second approach, the one adopted here, appeals to the Spirit as the minister of the Word, the one who leads the community into a correct interpretation of the text. The locus of the Spirit's re-creative work is not the letter of the text; this is fixed and hence forms our *retro*. Rather the Spirit's re-creative work centers on the life of the interpreter, who, as sinner, is inclined to distort the text insofar as its message is perceived as threatening the *status quo*.[23] Given this distortion, the Spirit guides and leads the interpreter to the truth of the text and its correct application into new situations and hence forms our *active.*[24]

Having articulated the difference between these two approaches it remains to further explicate the actual mission of the Holy Spirit as it relates to the interpreter of Holy Scripture. Roy Zuck provides fourteen propositions related to the Spirit and interpretation which culminate in five elements necessary for properly interpreting the Bible: "salvation, spiritual maturity, diligent study, common sense and logic, and humble dependence on the

A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992)*; The Openness of God: A Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God,* C. H. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker, and D. Basinger eds. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995); and C. H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

[21] A third approach is now becoming more popular—the role of the Spirit in the communicative event of reading Scripture and then seeking to apply it. See T. Meadowcroft, "Relevance as Mediating Category in the Reading of Biblical Texts: Venturing Beyond the Hermeneutical Circle," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 (2002), 611-627; and "Between Authorial Intent and Indeterminacy: The Incarnation as an Invitation to Human-Divine Discourse," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005), 199-218.

[22] See K. J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 415ff for a brief survey.

[23] Ibid., 415.

[24] For Vanhoozer, the formula is not retro + active but "biblical relevance = revelatory meaning + relative significance." Ibid., 423.

Spirit of God for discernment."[25] A nice illustration of this in practice is that of W. L. Lane who, in the preface to his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, writes:

> Only gradually did I come to understand that my primary task as a commentator was to listen to the text and to the discussion it has prompted over the course of centuries as a child who needed to be made wise. The responsibility to discern truth from error has been onerous at times. When a critical or theological decision has been demanded by the text before I was prepared to commit myself, I have adopted the practice of the Puritan commentators in laying the material before the Lord and asking for His guidance. This has made the preparation of the commentary a spiritual as well as an intellectual pilgrimage through the text of the Gospel. In learning to be sensitive to all that the evangelist was pleased to share with me I have been immeasurably enriched by the discipline of responsive listening.[26]

Lane, like Pinnock, appeals to the concept of *pilgrimage* as the best way to describe the way in which the exegete receives this ministry of the Word by the Holy Spirit. This pilgrimage, however, is not simply that of the individual exegete but involves the entire faith community. The work of the Spirit is thus a work *in* community and *for* community and so an examination of the communal nature of the of the Spirit's role in Interpretation is required.

III. The Community and the Spirit

Of special importance is the communal aspect of the reading and interpreting of Scripture.[27] On the basis of Acts 2, James McClendon argues that Scripture is addressed directly to readers *today*: Peter declares "this" (the event of Pentecost) is "that" (the meaning of the prophecy of Joel).[28] Such an interpretation is not merely Peter's human projection but a product of the Spirit's guidance. Only his sharing in the life of the believing community allowed Peter to see "this" as "that."

In a similar way to McClendon, Kevin Vanhoozer notes that when Ezra the scribe opened up the Scripture, the people literally "stood under" the text (Neh 8:5).[29] Their response to the reading showed that they understood and, as a result, worshipped. Contrast their response with that of earlier kings and priests who had failed to understand or to follow the law (Neh 9:34). A habit of disobedience had made it difficult to understand or to follow the biblical text. Under Ezra, by contrast, there was a week-long feast of reading, followed on the eighth day by a solemn assembly. The Scriptures were read and the people responded

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[25] R. B. Zuck, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 no. 562 (1984), 130.

[26] W. L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), xii.

[27] See Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text,* 15f.

[28] J. W. McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 1:31-33. Following McClendon's position would be R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989) and S. Hauerwas, *Unleashing Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

[29] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* 408ff. He also uses Acts 2 as a case study. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture,* 115 uses Acts 10-15 as his case study and comes to similar results.

in confession and worship (Neh 9:2-3). Here was no dead letter, no tired book, but a text that spoke directly to the people's hearts and minds.[30] Their reception of the text was the occasion for reformation and renewal, both communal in nature.

While a communal reception of the text under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is acknowledged, when this approach is taken to an extreme it reveals a problem, notably: How can the church know what God is saying through Scripture if what God is saying fails to coincide with the verbal meaning of the text? Hauerwas appeals to the leading of the Spirit.[31] But is this sufficient? The solution has problems. First, the Spirit's leading is often difficult to discern or to distinguish from merely human consensus. Second, it relocates the Word of God and divine authority from the text to the tradition of its interpretation.[32] When individualized, there is the constituent problem of subjectivity. However, when this is done in the context of ecclesial community it is perhaps similar to the early church and their use of the "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*). For Tertullian and Irenaeus, Scripture is rightly understood only in the context of the living tradition handed down through apostolic succession; tradition being both the content and context. Ultimately the criterion for right interpretation is the consensus of the catholic Church, best represented by the earliest creeds. On this view, the arbiter of right interpretation is the church, which enjoys not canonical but "*charismatic* authority, grounded in the assistance of the Spirit: *for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.*"[33] The function of the *regula fidei* is thus not overturned but placed within its proper context: the community which "stands under" the text of Scripture and the Spirit of Truth.

These issues are only a problem when a pneumatological hermeneutic is not at the same time a retroactive one. A retroactive hermeneutic seeks to hold together the plain sense of Scripture ("what it meant") with its use by the Spirit in the community ("its significance today"). We may now go back to Nehemiah 8 and look again at what was going on. Amidst a community that had departed from the Spirit, the Word held no great attraction for them. However, amidst the missionary work of the Spirit inhabiting the Word of the Law, the people were convicted, revived, and reformed.[34] Here, as Vanhoozer states: "The Spirit's role in bringing about understanding is to witness to what is other than himself (meaning accomplished) and to bring its significance to bear on the reader (meaning applied)."[35]

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[30] This relates to G. D. Fee's words in his *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 14, "During the process of exegesis we momentarily reverse these roles, so that we act as subject with the text as object. I would argue that the exegetical process is not completed until we return to the proper posture of objects being addressed by the subject."

[31] See for instance S. Hauerwas, "The Moral Authority of Scripture: The Politics and Ethics of Remembering", *Interpretation* (1980), 356-370.

[32] All criticisms made by Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* 411.

[33] Cited by Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* 411.

[34] This is why Fowl, *Engaging Scripture* 113ff, speaks about reading the Spirit and how that is crucial for the interpretive task. In fact, Fowl writes: "[the] experience of the Spirit's work provides the lenses through which Scripture is read rather than vice-versa. This is perhaps the most significant point the New Testament has to make about the hermeneutical significance of the Spirit; this point runs against the grain of modern interpretive presumptions," (114). Fowl goes on to elaborate on this controversial statement.

[35] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* 413.

Utilizing speech-act theory,[36] Vanhoozer outlines three aspects of the Spirit's work in bringing readers to understanding. First, the Spirit *convicts* believers that the Bible is divine as well as human locution (and thus to be read as a unified text). This relates to the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum* by which the reader comes to receive the Bible as the Word of God. Second, the Spirit *illuminates* the letter by impressing its illocutionary force upon the reader. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit believers see and hear the text of Scripture as warnings, commands, promises, and assertions. In so doing the Spirit does not alter but ministers the meaning. "The distinction between the 'letter' and the 'spirit' is precisely that between reading the words and grasping what one reads. Likewise, the difference between a 'natural' and an 'illuminated' understanding is that between holding an opinion and having a deep sense of its profundity."[37] Finally, what does the Spirit illumine, head or heart? Both! The Spirit's illumination of the mind is dependent on his prior transformation of the heart. Vanhoozer concludes:

> Negatively, the Spirit progressively disabuses us of any ideological or idolatrous prejudices that prevent us from receiving the message of the text. The Spirit purges us, first, of hermeneutic sin, of that interpretive violence that distorts the otherness of the text. Positively, the Spirit conforms our interests to those of the text. To read in the Spirit does not mean to import some new sense into the text, but rather to let the letter be, or better, to let it accomplish the purpose, illocutionary and perlocutionary, for which it was sent: '[My Word] will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Is 55:11). In short, the Spirit convicts, illuminates, and sanctifies the reader in order better to [sic] minister the Word.[38]

How do we foster this ecclesial context in which a Spirit-inspired hermeneutic or reading of Scripture takes place? For Stephen Fowl, the answer includes not only reading *with* the Spirit but also learning to "read the Spirit":

> If Christians are to interpret with the Spirit, they will also need to learn how to interpret the Spirit. Further, our prospects for interpreting the Spirit are closely linked to our proficiency at testifying to the Spirit's work, particularly the Spirit's work in the lives of others. Such testimony depends on the forming and sustaining of friendships in which our lives are opened to others in ways that display the Spirit's working. Welcoming strangers and the extension of hospitality become building blocks for such

[36] Speech-act theory involves three constituent elements: the "locutionary act" is the bare fact of the utterance of the text; the "illocutionary act" is the intent of the utterance or text; and the "perlocutionary act" is the effect on the reader or hearer.

[37] This relates back to points three and four on Zuck's list. Marshall points to passages such as 1 Thess 1:5 and 2:13 to indicate that Paul's preaching was effective because the Spirit was active in and through the preaching of the Word to produce faith, I. H. Marshall, "The Holy Spirit and the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed., R. B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 69. By this he indicates that understanding Scripture is not only an intellectual task, it is also a spiritual one.

[38] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* 413.

> friendships. Finally, building such friendships, becoming people of the Spirit, and recognizing and interpreting the work of the Spirit all take time and demand patience from us.[39]

The current essay is an attempt to initiate the sort of ecclesial bonding called for by Fowl. Evangelicals who are good at operating in the first horizon—the retrospective aspects of hermeneutics—require communion and cooperation from Pentecostals who are good at operating in the second horizon—the active or prospective aspects of hermeneutics. As both traditions collaborate together around the Word, filled by the Spirit, we may achieve far more than if we huddle away in our respective ecclesial ghettos and we may achieve a retroactive reading of Scripture which enriches our respective theologies.

IV. The Enrichment of Doctrine

The final issue which deserves some attention is the movement from Scripture, through exegesis, to doctrine. How do we speak of doctrinal development when a retroactive hermeneutic is applied? The correct development of doctrine is one involving a retroactive reading of the canon. Moltmann calls this a "reverse movement,"[40] while Pannenberg labels it "proleptic."[41] Or, for Donald Bloesch, it is a theology of "Word and Spirit."[42] When the two are kept together, theological construction emerges as both faithful and creative. But does it develop, change, or grow out of the original revelation preserved in Scripture? How do we articulate the relationship between exegesis and systematic theology when working within a retroactive hermeneutic?

The synoptic evangelists unfold the apostolic preaching of Christ as they tell the life history of Jesus. In these histories the central event is Jesus',

> …death on the cross and the experience of the presence of the risen One in the Spirit. Hence, we start with the past, with the deposit of faith left to us in the canon, and then in successive generations we attempt to

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[39] Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 119.

[40] J. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1990), 75. In his work *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 112ff, Moltmann speaks similarly of holding together the reciprocal relationship between historical and eschatological method, the historical and eschatological history of Jesus.

[41] Although Pannenberg's use of "proleptic" (derived, one would suppose, from the initial use by J. Weiss) includes a considerable amount of philosophical connotations we do not include in our term "retroactive." W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* trans. G. W. Bromley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 2:365, and *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 53-69. See Moltmann's critique of Pannenberg's thesis in *The Way of Jesus Christ,* 76, fn. 9. See D. P. Fuller, "A New German Theological Movement," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19 no. 2 (1996), 160-175.

[42] See the pneumatic/christological exegesis of D. G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation.* Christian Foundations 2. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 181, 200, 206-208, and "A Christological Hermeneutic: Crisis and Conflict in Hermeneutics," in *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*, ed. R. K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 78-102, and more fully worked out in his initial volume of the Christian Foundations series *A Theology of Word & Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology, Christian Foundations 1* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992).

> penetrate its truth or reality. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with advances in science and technology, we implement every means of inquiry in order to unpack and interpret the canon, not develop or improve on it. But within these tools of inquiry, the determinative principle of interpretation will always be the indwelling Holy Spirit.[43]

With Pinnock we assert that "God gives us freedom to operate within biblical boundaries by the Spirit, who inspired the witnesses and also opens the significance of scriptural words."[44] Or with Stephen Fowl we affirm that:

> It is crucially important to achieve a correct balance between the assertion that the disclosure of truth lies in the future and the assertion that it lies in the past. What lies in the future is a true apprehension of what has already happened in the past; and revelation is thereby tied irrevocably to the historicity and particularity of human existence within the world and prevented from drifting away into gnostic fantasy. Conversely, however, the meaning of what happened in the past cannot simply be read out of that past, conveyed by means of an authoritative tradition.[45]

Colin Gunton has provided an alternative to the idea of doctrinal *development* that accords with what has been presented here. He understands development to be more accurately that of "enrichment."[46] Development suggests a continuing process of change that could more accurately be termed *evolution*. Enrichment, in contrast, is a Spirit-inspired reading of the past from the vantage point of the future. It is a retroactive enterprise undertaken within the knowledge that we do not have the whole truth, but as the tradition passes through our hands, we seek to enrich it and, hence, it is not merely retrospective.[47] Utilizing Gunton's imagery of "enrichment" we may reject a view of an evolutionary development of doctrine in which its conclusions are patently different from its origins. Under this model of doctrinal development the original message has been transformed into something different. It is no longer related to the original canon. One such example would be the suggested development from the earliest worship practices characterized as polytheism, to a developed monotheism of the later Hebrew and early Christian writers, to contemporary forms of panentheism and pantheism. The latter positions are of a different sort than the former from which they have moved away. The development model is a

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[43] This would concur at many points with P. Stuhlmacher's call for a "hermeneutic of consent." See his *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik.* NTD Suppl. 6. 2nd ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 205-225

[44] Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 230. See further in his earlier works "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993), 3-23 and "The Role of the Spirit in Interpretation," 491-497.

[45] F. Watson, *Text, Church and World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 260-261.

[46] Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians*, 48-49. This is similar to what G. Kelly terms "traditioning," in "Spirit, Church and the Ecumenical Endeavour," Unpublished discussion paper of the *Australian Theological Forum* (1999), 13.

[47] In this regard see the programmatic thesis of V. S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

modernist one which claims that most teaching before the modern age is obsolete, so development involves being critical of it.

By contrast, Gunton's enrichment model or notion of "organic development," is intimately related to the canon. It is not another gospel but the enrichment of the original. The model of enrichment treats history as significant but the original witness, the canon, remains supreme.[48] An example of an organic development of doctrine would include the historical enrichment of the christological and trinitarian doctrines. In the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen moved beyond the words of Scripture to further articulate christological thought, using the term *perichoresis* to describe the intimate communion between the two natures of Christ. In the seventh century, Pseudo-Cyril used the same term to help illustrate the coinherence of the three persons of the Trinity.[49] In commenting on the theology enshrined in the orthodox creeds and definitions of Christendom such as Nicaea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381), and Chalcedon (AD 451), F. C. Grant writes: "these were not ventures in speculation, but, as their very language indicates, simply statements which *ruled out* various conceptions or attempted definitions which infringed or invalidated the language of Scripture and religious experience, especially of worship."[50] In this way, doctrine was enriched through the tradition and made relevant for a contemporary audience.

When we apply this hermeneutic to Christology, we see that while Jesus was misunderstood until after the resurrection and Pentecost, this very lack of understanding led to more reflection and deliberation on the actual life of Jesus, his words, and works (c.f., Jn 16:4). Any rewriting of history in a quasi-mythological way would have devalued the benefit of Christ's life for the Christian community rather than enriching it.[51] As such, the Gospels must be read in light of these eschatological events and the reinterpretation of them in light of the Spirit's illumination.[52] "As Christianity could properly claim to be a legitimate

[48] Obviously we are raising the question of presuppositions in hermeneutics. See M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), who argues that we deceive ourselves when we think we can achieve truth by approaching an object of study such as Jesus and the Gospels in a spirit of critical doubt and "scientific" objectivity. He argues that tacit beliefs/commitments affect all interpretation. What we are acknowledging is that tacit knowledge is equivalent to fiduciary knowledge which in turn is equivalent to our pneumatological hermeneutic. This is why correct exegesis can only be achieved from "within" therefore, the Gospel writers, as committed followers of Christ, are the most reliable storytellers. Cf. C. Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969). Polanyi's insights have been developed and applied forcefully by L. Newbigin when he speaks of "indwelling" the Story of the Bible in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), and "Truth and Authority in Modernity," in *Faith and Modernity*, eds., P. Sampson. V. Samuel, & C. Sugden (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), 60-115.

[49] On the use of *perichoresis* see J.P. Egan, "Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian (Oration) 31.14," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), 83-93.

[50] F. C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (New York: Abingdon, 1950), 243.

[51] E. Hoskyns and N. Davey, *The Riddle of the New Testament* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), 170. Also see Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 243 where he lists four points for evaluating claims to illumination and discernment.

[52] What has been termed "a hermeneutic from within," by R.G. Gruenler, *New Approaches to Jesus and the Gospels: A Phenomenological Study of Synoptic Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 129.

interpretation of the Old Testament in the light of Jesus, so the *kerygmatic* Christ can claim to be a legitimate interpretation of the historical Jesus in the light of Jesus' resurrection."[53] What the Gospels evince is the reinterpretation of Jesus, his identity and mission. It is a theological-biographical-historical account of the Messiah—the Christ, and a retroactive reading of his life and ministry.[54] Cullmann summarizes saying that,

> The problem of Jesus in its full theological scope was recognized only in the light of the new events of his death on the cross and the experience immediately following his resurrection. These events caused those momentary glimpses of recognition during Jesus' earthly life to stand out in the bright light of perception, and at least a few came to understand those indirect references of his which had found no open ears during his lifetime.[55]

Aspects of a retroactive hermeneutic, albeit couched in different terms and developed within quite a different context, have been adopted in recent ecumenical methodology as witnessed to by a recent Faith and Order paper on hermeneutics:

> The Holy Spirit inspires and leads the churches each to rethink and reinterpret their tradition in conversation with each other, always aiming to embody the one Tradition in the unity of God's church. The churches of God as living communities, constituted by faith in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, must always re-receive the Gospel in ways that relate to their present experience of life. It is in this process of re-reception that the minds of Christian communities are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to discern truth from falsehood and to acknowledge both the richness and the limitedness of the diverse geographical, historical, religious and social circumstances in which the Gospel is made manifest. Ecumenical hermeneutics is not an unaided human enterprise. It is an ecclesial act led by the Spirit and therefore it should be carried out in a setting of prayer.[56]

A retroactive hermeneutic is one in which the text of Scripture, the life of Christ, and the ongoing illumination of the Holy Spirit are equal participants in the church's ongoing task of understanding and articulating the Word of God for today. This hermeneutic and model of

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[53] Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, 216.

[54] C. E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1983), 61, speaks of Jesus" "suprahistorical significance" for the evangelists. For Moltmann, "the past can be narrated, and every narration, like enumeration, begins at the beginning and proceeds to the end. But in the direction of eschatological anticipation, the last must come first, the future precedes the past, the end reveals the beginning and objective time-relationships are reversed. "'History as recollection" and "'history as hope", within the "'hope in the form of recollections" which is the determining element of Christian faith, are not contradictory, but must be complementary," *The Crucified God*, 113.

[55] Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 319.

[56] *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Faith and Order Paper 182 (Geneva: WCC, 1998), n. 32.

doctrinal enrichment offers a way beyond sectarian disputes toward a more united Christian thought and practice.

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CHRISTOLOGY AND THE RELATIONAL JESUS

J. Lyle Story[1]

Introduction

Looking through the lens of Western thought, people often try to understand Jesus by analyzing Christological titles that Jesus uses of himself or that others use for him; titles such as "the Christ," "the Son of God" or "the Son of Man." The Evangelists, however, do far more. They tell a story of a person who makes profound impressions upon human beings and relates to them in unique ways. In the Jesus-story, the Evangelists do not provide the readers with a simple bare record of what Jesus did and said in a "blow by blow" fashion. Instead, they accentuate his relational approach, his activity, and teachings, in the context of personal interaction with individuals and groups. The two Nativity stories (Mt. 1-2; Lk. 1-2) report the virgin-conception only briefly. The Evangelist's chief concerns are to narrate how simple human figures relate to the "good news" of Jesus' birth (e.g., Joseph, Herod, astrologers, the Scribes, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, shepherds, Simeon, Anna). Through these persons, the overall impression conveyed by Matthew and Luke is that Jesus is the "good news of God."

The Evangelists offer a *portrait* of Jesus, not simply a photographic image. In this portrait, they provide color, depth, and a full and dynamic perspective of Jesus in his relatedness to others. They open a living window into Jesus' relationships through which to view him, a view that cannot be captured by mere academic discussions of the various Christological titles; often the confessional titles express Jesus' distance from humanity. Even in John's lofty Prologue, the Word (λόγος) who existed prior to creation and was involved in creation, became flesh (Jn. 1:14) and pitched his tent among people. The Word is also equivalent with the "Utterly Unique God" (μονογενής), who resides in a privileged relationship ("in the bosom," κόλπος) with the Father, and who is thus able to "tell the story, narrate, exegete" (ἐξηγεῖσθαι) the Father (Jn. 1:18). Thus, through his relationality with the Father, Jesus is empowered to share the story, nature, and relationality of the Father with others. Similarly, just as Jesus lives in an ever-so-close relationship with the Father, so the Fourth Evangelist, who is in the privileged position of being "at the bosom of Jesus" (13:25 στῆθος), is able to narrate the Jesus-story through his gospel.

Not only is Jesus a social person, but he expresses the sociality of God, who invites people to a new and full relationship with Jesus as a man who is gentle and humble. By way of contrast, religious leaders saddle people with burdensome demands, expressed through Jewish casuistry (Mt. 11:25-30; 23:4). Jesus' people, however, will experience relationality with both him and the Father through a unique camaraderie.

People relate to Jesus in diverse ways. Over the course of time, they realize that he transcends ordinary human life. Those who experience the Risen Lord also affirm the close connection with Jesus in his earthly ministry. They do not think of him as a "ghost" or "angelic being." Rather, the Risen Lord is one and the same with the person who had walked

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and related with them in the Palestinian countryside. This is the same person with whom they had shared countless meals. Their concern for continuity between the earthly Jesus and the Risen Lord leads them to select a twelfth apostle, with the necessary qualification that this person was one who had been an eyewitness of Jesus and with him from the very beginning of his public ministry (Acts 1:21ff.). What that relationship implies is admirably articulated in 1 John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled concerns the Word of Life" (1 Jn. 1:3).

Among other things, the Jesus-story includes: 1) The significant relational impressions that Jesus creates, 2) The varied human responses to Jesus, and 3) Titles by which people address Jesus.

Significant Relational Impressions That Jesus Creates

The superior impression that Jesus makes upon others—whether disciples, individuals, crowds, or religious authorities—is variously narrated and cannot be easily categorized under one heading. Just as Jesus is an exceedingly complex person, the response of the various people is also exceedingly intricate. Further, the same persons relate in many different ways to Jesus, based upon the context of his revelation of himself in diverse works and words. Various events elicit an incredible attraction to him and also reveal a distancing posture as they grapple with the mystery of his person.

Impressions of his interest in people. Through stories, explicit teachings, and parabolic language, Jesus reflects his interest and God's concern with people, illustrated by the trilogy of parables in Lk. 15 that reflect Jesus' and God's interest in people. Through his commitment to the marginalized (Lk. 15:1-2), he acts in concert with God as he portrays concern through a searching shepherd, searching housewife, and a searching father. People are of inestimable worth, far more than a sheep or coin. The finding of the lost is celebrated with a contagious joy which must be shared with other shepherds, neighboring women, or a father's household. In the third parable, the repentance motif uppermost, if present, it is only minor; the father's joy over the recovered son reigns supreme. The story emphasizes the priority of God's love for sinners; indeed, it is God's love and grace for all that makes repentance possible. The father, like Jesus and God the Father, loves both sons with a love that knows no limits, that forgives without boundaries, and rejoices with an uncontained joy.

Jesus points to the ludicrous practice of tithing kitchen spices, without reference to people. Instead, he points to social justice, mercy, and faith—the all-important responses for treating people (Mt. 23:23-24). God's relationality is expressed in Jesus' teaching and practical interest in others. Jesus spends himself upon people. He is accessible to those from the top to the bottom of society whether it be Nicodemus, the rich young ruler, the twelve, other disciples, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, fallen men and women, or hated tax-collectors, such as Zacchaeus. Jesus is busy, non-stop with the needs of others. He is no recluse or sage who retreats to some hermit-like existence. Instead he is constantly "on the move" in beneficent ways, expressing his compassion and grace through teaching, responsiveness to the needs of others, to their healing, and to the reorientation of their lives. He finds it necessary late at night or early in the morning to be renewed in his relationship with the Father. In the daytime, he is in constant demand. Everywhere Jesus goes, he looks to relate to people and thereby relate them to God who seeks relatedness with them. Through Jesus, God is bent on

a rescue-mission for people who have lost their way. Jesus' joy in table-fellowship with the marginalized also reflects the joy of God and his angels.

Impressions of his compelling presence. The effect of Jesus' person, words, and works is clearly expressed through the responses of those around him. The Baptist, who is the promised forerunner, immediately senses his own inferior position in baptizing the superior "Coming One." He tries avoiding the anomalous situation of a mightier one being baptized by the lesser (Mt. 3:14-15; cf. also Mt. 3:11-19; Mk. 1:7-8; Le. 3:15-18; Jn. 1:26-27). As the Baptist's ministry winds down, he recognizes the centrality of the bridegroom. The Baptist diminishes in comparison, since he is simply the friend of the bridegroom who shares in the joy of the occasion. It is of divine necessity that Jesus will increase while John the Baptist must decrease (Jn. 3:28-30).

Jesus' command, "follow me," invites relationship and obedience that are coupled with his faithful promise. People leave their vocations, families, homes and commit themselves fully to a new uncharted experience, founded on a person and promise, "I will make you to become fishers of people" (Mk. 1:16-20). The disciples give themselves without reservation to this one who totally reorients their lives (cf. also Jn. 1:39, 43). They discover that Jesus lays down conditions and rules for discipleship when he invites them into relationship (Mt. 8:18-22; Lk. 9:47-60; Mt. 19:16-29—the rich young ruler, par.). In a fishing context, Jesus commands Peter—the expert fishermen—and Peter obeys the seemingly absurd command, even though it runs counter to his savvy as to the right time and place to fish. He will not contradict Jesus' presence and authority. Thus he says "But *at your word*, I will let down the nets" (Lk. 5:5). While Jesus enjoys the company of others, he does not allow for intrusion into his own inner circle. A paralytic at the Sheep Pool hears his word, "Arise, take up your bed and walk" (Jn. 5:8), obeys, and is healed of his 38-year paralysis.

Jesus' formal appointment of the twelve begins with the purpose statement, "to be with him" (Mark 3:14-15). Relationship with Jesus precedes their commission (Mk. 3:14-15; Mt. 10:5ff. Mk. 6:7ff. Lk. 9:1ff.) or the seventy's charge (Lk. 10:1ff.) on their short-term missions trip. Due to their relationship to him, they obey and venture out into the hazardous task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God with a "hands-on" approach. They carry out his charge and are responsive to Jesus in "report-back" sessions when they are "with Jesus" again (Mark 6:30). Matthew punctuates his gospel in the beginning, the mid-point, and conclusion by means of the "*with*" language (Immanuel, "God with us," 1:23, reinterpreting Is. 7:14; "I am there in their midst" in the Church's decisions, 18:20; "I will be with you" in the final commission—28:20). The Fourth Gospel advances the thought to the coming day of the Paraclete, when a transition will be made from being "with you" to the wonder of the inner union between Jesus and his disciples, "in you" (Jn. 14:7). Moreover, his promise, "I come to you" (Jn. 14:18) will be realized in and through the person of the Paraclete. Jesus makes an amazing promise: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our room with him" (Jn. 14:23).[2] What a statement! God the Father and God the Son will both come to a believer and make their "room" with he or she. This is the same "room" (μονή) noted in Jn. 14:2: "In my Father's house are many rooms." The purpose of Jesus' ministry is to bring people to the Father's "house" (οἰκία),

[2] The word "room/abode" (μονή in Jn. 14:23) is linked together with the important Johannine verb, "to abide" (μένειν).

and yet, within this "house," there are many "rooms" that consist of divine and human fellowship.

His commanding presence and independence surface when he sets his own agenda and timetable for the course of his ministry. He proceeds to the North into Gentile territory when he determines the need to leave Jewish soil and minister in other settings (Mt. 16:13; Mk. 8:27; Mk. 7:24-31; Mt. 15:21-29). Correspondingly, he is independent with respect to the traditions of the elders (Mk. 7:1ff.). Although he is responsive to human needs, human questions and problems, he does not allow himself to be dictated by the agendas of other people, e.g., "And after that no one dared to ask him any question" (Mt. 22:46; Mk. 12:34; Lk. 20:40). Frequently, Jesus' wishes become commandments. Thus, Jesus' mother, not rebuffed by Jesus' sharp statement, says to the servants at the wedding of Cana, "Whatever he says unto you, do it" (Jn. 2:5). We find no instances where people pay no attention to his claims, requests, or demands. When Jesus sends his disciples to find a donkey, he is certain that the owner of the donkey will honor his request (Mk. 11:3; Mt. 21:3; Lk. 19:3).

After Jesus' inaugural address in Nazareth, the angry Jews lead Jesus to a cliff, but dared not touch him, "But he passing through the midst of them went his way" (Lk. 4:30). When the Jews intended to stone him, "Jesus hid himself and went out of the Temple" (Jn. 8:59; 10:39). Likewise, he single-handedly expels the vendors from the Temple. It seems that no one possesses the mettle to challenge his compelling presence and behavior (Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-19; Lk. 19:45-48). The term "hour" (wra) is central to John's portrayal (26 occurrences); it is similar to an irresistible force that precludes any premature event that would forestall his "hour" that is predetermined by the Father, e.g., "They sought…to take him, and no man laid hand on him, because his hour was not yet come" (Jn. 7:30; 8:20, Jn. 13:1; 17:1; see also 7:44; Mk. 11:19). Jesus is unmoved by Herod's intent to kill him or the threats of others. Rather, he sends a report back to Herod that he remains the master of his own destiny (Lk. 13:31-32).

The trial scenes are rich in comic and tragic irony. Ostensibly, Jesus is being judged by various individuals and groups of people; however, the real judge of the trial is Jesus, who indicts the High Priest, mob, Sanhedrin, Herod and Pilate—indeed, the whole world for their rejection of him. Someone may ask, "How does he do this?" Certainly it is by his powerful presence and word that he indicts. He allows the people, inadvertently, to pronounce their own consequential guilt and apostasy: "His blood be upon us and our own children" (Mt. 27:25) and "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn. 19:15).

Impressions of Jesus' filial relationality with his Father. Through teaching, activity, and prayer, Jesus opens a window for others to witness his unique relationship with his Father. Jeremias states, "We are so accustomed, and rightly so, to make Jesus the object of religion that we become apt to forget that in our earliest records he is portrayed not as the object of religion, but as a religious man."[3] It is important to appreciate his "Abba" ("Father, Dear Father") bond (Mk. 14:36). As a man, Jesus prays and, as a son, Jesus shares in the sociality of his Father. During Jesus' experience in the baptism and transfiguration, or in times of prayer, what is communicated to him is not simply the message or ministry but *status* and *relationship*. The major focus in his life and ministry is not based solely on the message of

[3] Ibid., p. 101.

what he says or does, but *who he is—in relationship with the Father*. His mission proceeds from his relational experience with God.

In Jesus' thanksgiving-prayer (Mt. 11:25-30), we note that Jesus possesses an unshared sonship. Jesus speaks to God and his friends about the unique depth and intimacy of the relationship he enjoys with the Father. Jesus not only claims to know God, but to know the Father in a way that no one else does. The verb, translated, as "I know" (γινώσκω) parallels the compound verb, "I fully know" (ἐπιγινώσκω). The verbal forms do not mean the possession of theological information, but a profound experience that involves mind, heart, and will. Knowledge of God means sharing in the sociality or fellowship with God. Since Jesus is the unique son, who alone stands in an unmediated relationship with God, he is able to extend a mediated relationship to others with God as their Father. Jesus makes the Father real for others. The mediated knowledge of the Father is not abstract theology or propositional learning about the nature or attributes of God. It means an experience of the fully personal and mediated relationship between the Father and humankind.

In John 5, the Father-son relationship is comparable to a similar relationship in a family bond. At birth, an infant is completely subject to the parent in that the infant does nothing in and of itself but is fully dependent (John 5:19, 30). Subsequently, the child begins to learn from the parental example as the parent "shows all things" to the child, which the child also does (5:20). Finally, the child becomes a young man or young woman to whom the parent now "gives authority" (5:27).[4] At the same time, it is love that provides the link between the three life-stages: infancy (dependence), adolescence (learned exposure), and mature adulthood (independence). Through his dependent relationship with the Father, Jesus is enabled to see what the Father is doing (5:19) and thereby, to gauge his actions accordingly. Two items are singled out in this unique relationship: an authority to administer justice (5:22) and an authority to enliven the dead (5:21). His authority to administer justice is given to him but, from the human perspective, it is the consequence of conscious rejection or dishonor of both the son and the Father.

Luke provides the reason for the Lord's Prayer (Lk. 11:1) which begins with the "Our Father" language. His disciples sense that religious authorities provide a model prayer which would thereby reflect their attachment to them as leading religious authorities, like the Baptist. Their desire is to become disciples of their one true leader. The request is granted and the disciples are invited into the sociality of family relationship. The request is positioned by their observation of Jesus' praying activity (11:1). In a similar way, Jesus prays at Lazarus' tomb in such a public way that people might believe that Jesus is the "sent-one" from God (Jn. 11:41-42). His prayer begins with "Father language." In Jesus' High-Priestly Prayer, there are concentric circles of concern, from Jesus' relationship with the Father (Jn. 17:1-5), to the disciples (17:6-19), and finally, to the world (17:20-26). Through this opened window, the disciples view and experience the progressive flow of life and love, from the Father, to Jesus, to them, and their witness in the world through unity and love. In a meaningful way, Jesus uses the Father-address at various points in his prayer (17:1, 11, 24, 25).

[4] Cullen I K Story, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose, Pattern and Power*, (Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 2000), pp. 121-132.

Impressions of his miraculous power and its effect upon others. Numerous stories in the gospels narrate Jesus' miraculous power. Jesus does not begin his ministry with works to demonstrate his superiority over others. Indeed, before he begins his ministry to others, the Devil challenges Jesus in vain to display his powers such as would coerce faith—a challenge which Jesus rejects. People who come to Jesus do not doubt his ability to effect the miraculous, although they may be uncertain about his willingness to effect a cure/exorcism in their particular instance (Mk. 1:40; Mt. 8:2; Lk. 5:12; also Mt. 8:9ff. Lk. 7:8ff.). Even Jesus' opponents, who challenge him to perform a conclusive sign from his cross, ostensibly do not doubt his miraculous power.

There is a numinous quality of Jesus that is variously perceived by others, including his own disciples. They recognize that there is something "different" about him, expressed by the supplicant's acts of physical prostration before him or by reaching out to touch his garment for healing (Mk. 5:25-34; Mt. 9:20-29; Lk. 8:43-48). Needy people kneel before him (Mk. 1:40; 5:22); demoniacs recognize his authority and identity and cower before him (Mk. 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; 9:20). Even his opponents recognize his charismatic authority when they question its source: "By what authority do you do these things?" (Mk. 11:28). As Dunn notes, "The aim of the question was to expose Jesus' lack of authority; but the very fact that it was put to him demonstrates a recognition on the part of Jesus' opponents that his words and actions embodied and expressed a claim to high authority--only it was an authority they could not recognize, without rabbinic or priestly sanction."[5]

Jesus' own hometown folk struggle with his "otherness," recognized through his teaching, wisdom, and mighty works: "And on the Sabbath he began to *teach* in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get *all this*? What is the *wisdom* given to him? What *mighty works* are wrought by his hands!'?" (Mk. 6:2). His personal concern is expressed through effective power: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, demoniacs are set free, the dead are raised, and the poor and sinful experience his acceptance and power to forgive their sins. The authority to act in wholeness for others is explicit and is transferred to Jesus' disciples, who are sent out on short-term mission trips (Mt. 10:1; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:1), "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you" (Lk. 10:19).

Jesus uses his Spirit-given power (Mk. 1:11) for the wellbeing of others; he proclaims the good news of the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14-15; Mt. 4:17; Lk. 4:16-30). He heals the sick (Lk. 4:33-36), exorcises the demon-possessed (Mk. 1:23-27), changes water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11), feeds the 5000 (Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14) and 4000 (Mk. 8:1-10; Mt. 15:32-39) in a miraculous manner so as to meet the real needs of people. One exception concerns the cursing/withering of the fig-tree (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-25). Jesus seeks relationship with others before they associate his benefits and gifts with his person. Even though people come to him with their pressing physical needs, they learn that he deals with them individually, in a completely personal manner; thereby, they develop a relationship with his person, not merely as a benefactor. The disciples soon learn that following Jesus not only means that they become the recipients of various forms of blessing, but it also enables them

[5] James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit.* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 77.

to deepen their relationship with him, apart from certain "benefits." Thus, they will learn what it means to drink his cup of suffering and share in his fearful baptism (Mk. 10:35-40; Mt. 20:20-23)—quite apart from personal gain. His gifts and benefits are appreciated in greater ways when people are joined by faith in him. They are attracted by Jesus' personal interest in them as he also reveals his concerns through his attendance to needed benefits and gifts.

Impressions of his commanding authority to forgive sins. Jesus' claim to forgive sins not only causes perplexity, but offence as well. To the religious leaders, his claim was tantamount to blasphemy in that he assumes God's sole prerogative (Ps. 103:3; Is. 43:25). In OT practice, the sacrifices of the High Priest would effectively atone for sins, but it is clear that God alone reserves the right to forgive sins through sacrifices. Unintentional sins could thereby be atoned for, but not sins of "a high hand" (intentional sins). However, divine acceptance of the marginalized and publicly acknowledged sinners is symbolized through Jesus' consistent table-fellowship with the religious outcasts. Thereby, he earns for himself the sneering epithet, "glutton, a drunkard and friend of tax-collectors and sinners" (Lk. 7:34-35). When four friends lower a paralytic down through the roof, Jesus initially pronounces the forgiveness of the man's sin, "Child, your sins are forgiven"[6] (Mk. 2:5 par.). He then substantiates his divine prerogative through the actual healing, "in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins…" (Mk. 2:10). He forgives the sinful woman's "many sins," thus inspiring her lavish gratitude ("she loves more"). Conversely, his opponents are characterized as those who "love less." (Lk. 7:49). Critics question his claim, but they are unable to deny the facts that are before them.

Impressions of his insight, experience and embodiment of truth. Jesus impresses individuals and groups with his solid commitment to truth and reality. He demonstrates penetrating insight into the nature, circumstances, and motives of individuals. There are occasions when he "reads" the thoughts of people; thus his prophetic insight (not omniscience) is expressed as human needs arose: to the paralytic (Mk. 2:5 par.), to opponents (2:8; Lk. 5:22), to a sinful woman and his critics (Lk. 7:39ff.), to Nathaniel (Jn. 1:47ff.), and to a Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:16-18). He also knows of some events occurring outside of his own locale (Mk. 7:29; Jn. 4:50-52) that are later confirmed. The same holds true for his three passion pronouncements (Mk. 8:31; 9:12-13; 10:33-35).

When Jesus speaks, the people perceive that he speaks with "authority" (ἐξουσία), with a perception of truth that is clearly firsthand, both before and after an exorcism (Mk. 1:22, 27). He claims to embody the truth (Jn. 14:6). His very person confronts people with truth, rendering them incapable of remaining neutral or objective. His truth cannot be casually ignored or dismissed. Jesus approaches no one as "elect" or "reprobate"; rather, he addresses them as free moral agents, who make choices and must live with their consequences, for good or for ill. Thus, his truth confronts people with a critical decision: Will they become what God desires them to be or will they remain detached from personal relationship with him? Thus, the rich young ruler is challenged to make a decision as to his relative commitment to God or his riches (Mk. 10:21; Mt. 19:21). To give his goods to the poor is only an initial stop. The goal is that he should follow Jesus, i.e., establish a close relationship to him (Mk. 10:21). Not only does Jesus press for a decision by unbelievers, but

[6] An example of the use of the divine passive, i.e., "God has forgiven your sins."

he similarly challenges his disciples as to their own personal witness, "But who do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15 par.). In the light of Peter's later threefold denial, Jesus recommissions the fallen leader in a threefold manner, for his pastoral and nurturing role within the new community of faith (Jn. 21:15-17). Peter is thereby made aware of the implications of his relationship to Jesus. Through numerous encounters, Jesus articulates that the new life he embodies and offers begins with an attachment and relationship to his person, to be followed by growth in relationship to him for their future lives and direction.

Impressions of his courage and vulnerability. Jesus exhibits courage when he confronts the religious and civil powers of his day. In climates of suspicion and murderous intent, Jesus aggressively heals a man with a withered hand by urging the man to come into the center of the assembly, thereby making his healing both public and aggressive (Mk. 3:1-6). He speaks numerous parables, which are addressed to people with certain problems such as religious pride (Lk. 18:9-14), and some, who critique Jesus' relatedness to the marginalized, through table fellow-fellowship with them (Lk. 15:1-2; Lk. 19:1-10). When Jesus sets his face like a flint to travel to Jerusalem, he does so with determination and vulnerability (Lk. 9:51). His travel to Judea to raise Lazarus from the dead is set in a context of homicidal hostility, well-expressed by Thomas (Jn. 11:16). He enters Jerusalem with vulnerability (Jn. 12:9-19). The religious climate is filled with vicious intent, not only for Jesus but for Lazarus as well, who has just been raised from the dead. Various actions, such as washing the disciples' feet (Jn. 13:1-11) and discourses in the Upper Room (Jn. 13-17), reveal Jesus' vulnerability as well as his volition. Earlier in his Mashal of the Good Shepherd, Jesus underscores the truth that in his upcoming violent end, he is no passive agent; Jesus voluntarily gives his life, which implies that his accusers are unable to "do him in" (Jn. 10:18).

Impressions of the mystery and paradox of his person (*attraction and revulsion*). Blaise Pascal said, "A religion which does not affirm that God is hidden is not true." Others have pointed to "the elusive presence,"[7] which creates an incredible disturbance for people as they encounter Jesus. Similar to magnetic charges, there is both an attraction and revulsion in relationship to Jesus, expressed by individuals and groups. This dual contradictory reaction, in one way or another, suggests the greatness of his person. When Jesus acts in a saving manner for disciples who believe that they are perishing out at sea, they respond with amazement, "What sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Mt. 8:26). Peter senses that the authority of Jesus is far superior to his own fishing expertise and the result is a miraculous catch of fish. His response is one of utter self-revulsion—"Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8). When the disciples see Jesus walking on the water, "they were troubled and cried out for fear" (Mk. 6:49-50; Mt. 14:26). Similarly, Jesus' teaching evokes fright by the crowds (Mt. 9:8). Frequently, the disciples experience a fear of rebuke when "they did not understand the saying(s): "they were afraid to ask him." They apparently feel that asking questions or raising issues on their part might incur his displeasure or show disrespect. In this they sadly fail to sense what is in Jesus' heart and mind

There are significant moments where the Evangelists convey these dual responses: annunciation stories, transfiguration and resurrection appearances. Mary is encouraged as one who has been favored by God and the recipient of the divine promise, "The Lord is

[7] e.g., Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978).

with you" (Lk. 1:28, 30) and summoned to rejoice in Gabriel's message. However, she is also admonished to "cease being afraid"[8] (1:30). The text notes that "she was troubled and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be" (1:29). The experience of the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration is unnerving, "they fell on their faces and were exceedingly afraid" (Mt. 17:6), unthinking (Mk. 9:6 par.), and silent (Lk. 9:36). Similarly, the appearances of the Risen Jesus, either in Jerusalem, on the Emmaus Road or in Galilee evoke responses of both joy and fright:

"*Cease being afraid*" (Mt. 28:5)

"So they departed quickly from the tomb with *fear* and *great joy*…" (28:7)

"And they came up and *took hold of his feet* and *worshiped* Him" (28:9)

"Stop being afraid" (28:10)

"And when they saw him, they *worshiped* him, but some *doubted*" (28:18)

"And they went out and fled from the tomb; for *trembling* and *astonishment* had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were *afraid*" (Mk. 16:8)

"And as they were *frightened* and bowed their faces to the ground…" (Lk. 24:5)

"And as they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were *startled* and *frightened*, and supposed that they saw a spirit" (24: 36-37)

"And while they still *disbelieved for joy*, and *wondered*…" (24:41)

"the doors being shut where the disciples were, for *fear* of the Jews, Jesus came and said to them, '*Peace* be with you'" (Jn. 20:19)

"Then the disciples were *glad* when they saw the Lord" (20:20)

While the exact chronology, variety, and place of the resurrection appearances are extremely complex issues, the gospel narratives unite in their witness of the intermingling of great joy and great fear. At Pentecost, the disciples' response is notably different; it was now clear to them that Jesus is not only risen from the dead, but is also the Son of God in power. He is both the savior and heavenly judge (Acts 2:40; 10:42; 17:31). Through this admixture of joy and fear, various witnesses of the Risen Jesus, express their great attraction to Jesus that is balanced by their fear/awe of this person. He is like no other; he also belongs to a "wholly other" sphere. Attraction to Jesus and love for him are compatible with fear and awe of him. He is familiar, yet strangely unfamiliar.

His acceptance, love, and compassion. People also experience and respond to the incredible love that Jesus expresses for them. Jesus is the one who knits together love for God and love for others in an indissoluble bond; such a dual-bond is the supreme commandment upon which all other commandments depend.

[8] The use of the negative (μή) "no/not" when used with the present imperative, "fear," points to the cessation of a response or activity that is already in progress.

Jesus accepts others where they are; he does not expect people to "get cleaned up" before he relates to them. In the Middle East, table-fellowship means acceptance, celebration, and commitment to fellow-participants of a common meal with sacral implications. His offer of discipleship to one hated tax collector, Levi, issues in Jesus' table-fellowship with other tax collectors. Here is one who takes them seriously and accepts them in an unconditional manner. Correspondingly, Jesus answers the charges of his critics with the metaphor of a doctor with diseased patients. A doctor goes through medical school and various internships for the express purpose of *being with* the sick. It is unthinkable for a doctor to go through necessary training and refuse *to be with* the diseased. Thus, Jesus affirms that his place (as a physician) is with sinners (Mk. 2:18-22); he is constantly found in their presence as he accepts them and relates to them, where they are. He invites himself to Zacchaeus' home for table-fellowship, before Zacchaeus' repentance and planned restitution. Through a trilogy of parables in Lk. 15, Jesus justifies his acceptance, table-fellowship and celebration with tax-collectors and sinners. He is to be found where they are.

He is aware of profound human problems with all of their various forms of alienation. He views every person he encounters as possessing inestimable worth (Mt. 6:25-34). He is concerned with the needs of his audience, not with his own agenda, troubles, or difficulties that would detract his interest away from his social environment. Even though Jesus experiences incredible agony in Gethsemane, he still has his disciples in mind, "be watchful and pray; otherwise you might fall into the snares of the Tempter" (Mk. 14:38; Mt. 26:41; Lk. 22:46). Similarly, on the cross, where he experiences physical, emotional, spiritual agony and shame, he nonetheless provides for the future wellbeing of his mother, the beloved disciple (Jn. 19:20-27), and the needed encouragement for a dying thief (Lk. 23:39-43).

People genuinely appreciate Jesus' willingness to share in personal dialogue with them. Powerful patrons often express no such personal interest in the recipients of their power. Whatever Jesus does or says comes straight from his heart to the heart of others. Jesus is equally at home with children as well as adults, with women as well as men, with educated and uneducated, with poor and powerful, or with religious and irreligious. He seems to have no difficulty in "switching gears" from one group to another. Further, he often directs conversation away from external issues to matters of eternal importance. Thus, when Nicodemus introduces himself with a non-committal courtesy, Jesus directs him to the necessary birth from on high for entrance into the Kingdom of God. The Samaritan woman makes a flippant remark about "well water" and being greater than Jacob our father; Jesus instead deals with the misery of her life and the genuine satisfaction that he alone offers. Martha is introduced as the charming hostess who becomes irately jealous at her sister; Jesus reminds her of the essence of life, which she has forgotten in her busy activities.

Jesus deals with his opponents in the same way. In the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, Jesus expresses himself with vulnerability in the story, since he is the beloved son, who offers one last chance for the tenants to honor the owner's claim for the vineyard and its produce (Mt. 21:33-46). Sadly enough, the religious leaders perceive that this parable was directed to them, thereby leading to a further brutal plot (Mt. 21:45-46). He is desperate to offer them one last chance to turn from their dastardly plan—to turn and to accept the salvation offered through relationship with him. His offer of the dipped morsel to Judas appears to be a "last-ditched-effort" to turn Judas from his betrayal-plan. It is not at all surprising to find that the people en masse flock to him. To be sure, they are attracted by his

powerful deeds, but at the same time, they sense that this is one who takes genuine interest in them. His spontaneous interest in people enables them to overcome their inhibitions and approach him. Such interest creates a "safe" environment for people to confess their sins or venture vulnerable expressions (e.g., anointing his feet). It is Jesus who offers his own the special privilege of "friendship" (Jn. 15:15), "no longer do I call you servants…but I have called you friends." Friendship is defined here as privileged communication with his own.

Compassion is a motivation for Jesus' teaching ministry. It is shown to the Jews as he teaches the masses, since they are "as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mk. 6:34; Mt. 9:36). Compassion goes hand in hand with activity, e.g., his healing ministry, teaching, and feeding miracles:

"As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and ***he felt compassion*** for them, and healed their sick" (Mt. 14:14)

"And Jesus ***in compassion*** touched their [two blind men] eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed him" (Mt. 20:24)

"***I have compassion*** upon the crowd because they have remained with me three days and they do not have anything to eat" (Mk. 8:2; cf. Mt. 8:2)

"And when the Lord saw her [widow of Nain] ***he had compassion*** on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'" (Lk. 7:13)

It is striking that the verb "to feel compassion" (σπλαγχνίζεσθαι) occurs only in the gospels (12 times), each time with reference to Jesus' emotive motivation (two of the occurrences of the verb are used in parables by Jesus). People immediately sense his compassion for them and seek him for some evidence of his compassion. They assume that Jesus is willing to give advice or help them; sometimes they appeal to his will (Mk. 1:40; Mt. 8:2) and lay their requests before Him (Mk. 1:40; Mk. 2:1-12; 9:22ff; Mt. 8:2; 8, 9; Lk. 7:8ff.).

Jesus never demands any reward or compensation for his help nor do the people respond with remuneration for his help. There are some instances where people express spontaneous gratitude (Lk. 7:36ff; 17:16). However, Jesus clearly directs their attention away from the gift to the giver (Mk. 1:44; Mt. 8:4; Lk. 5:14; Lk. 13:10-17). Those who receive his benefits, but are unwilling to risk acceptance of Jesus' compassion and relationship with him, soon lose what has been given to them. Jesus pronounces woes on the Galilean cities that were unresponsive to the benefits that occurred in their midst (Mt. 11:20-24; Lk. 10:13-15). The love of Jesus is expressed as compassion and grace, i.e., his attitude and saving activity towards those whom he loves; correspondingly the recipients bring nothing to the helpful event that would in some way make them deserving of such blessing.

Over the course of time in the Early Church, people become progressively aware of the extent of Christ's love. Thereby, their appreciation grows for the greatness of his grace, love, and benefits. While other human gifts lose their value to the recipient over time (e.g., Christmas gifts), Jesus' gifts and benefits grow in human recipients (I Cor. 15:10; II Cor. 8:9). After the Ascension, the Church more fully appreciates the immensity and magnitude of Christ's love than during Jesus' lifetime. While the Gospel records narrate particular grace-events, extended to various individuals, the Early Church comes to appreciate that the whole of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection express his love, grace, and compassion for the

whole of humankind (Acts 10:38; Eph. 5:21; 5:25; I Pet. 1:8). His compassion is directed to persons, motivated by his deep desire to accept them and help them in their most pressing needs, irrespective of the relative worth or position of the recipient(s).

Impressions of his transforming presence and power. The response by Jesus' followers is not simply external, but they respond in trust and obedience to his call. Their initial commitment to Jesus also issues in an inner transformation, well expressed by the significant change in Peter's name (Mt. 16:17-18), which would make clear his future leadership role in the Early Church. The sinful woman who expresses such lavish gratitude ("loves more") to Jesus has been transformed by the power of Jesus' forgiveness of her past (Lk. 7:35-50; see also Mk. 14:3-9; Mt. 26:6-13; Jn. 12:1-8). The power of Jesus' acceptance, table-fellowship and forgiveness issues in Zacchaeus' distribution of half of his wealth for the poor and restitution for illegal seizure (Lk. 19:1-10). Regardless of the type of positive interaction that Jesus shares with others, the effect is the same—people are filled with strength for their new way of life. The various changes that occur in individuals are holistic and affect the deepest core of their existence. While we do not read of the future history of each individual that Jesus touches; several stories provide ample evidence of typical responses. We find that a person such as Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (Lk. 23:49), goes to the tomb on Easter morning (Mk. 15:19; Jn. 20:1). In turn, she becomes one of the first "apostles" of the resurrection. Such changes are wrought by Jesus as the giver of life (Jn. 10:10), the one who is the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25; way, truth and the life Jn. 14:6).

Impressions of his revolutionary approach coupled with accommodation. When Jesus relates to others, he often comes off as a revolutionary through his words and his actions. In a score of encounters, he is a great controversialist. He affirms his commitment to Torah (instruction) and sharply opposes Pharisaic religious tradition concerning issues such as the "washing" rituals or Corban (Mk. 7:1-23 par.). Apparently, the Pharisees hold higher regard for their religious "fence," i.e., tradition, instead of Torah. He argues against the Sadducees and their denial of the supernatural, including their denial of the resurrection (Mk. 12:18-27 par.). Through encounter with others and through his parables, he emphasizes the truth that the new relationship that he offers is not based upon religious performance but upon divine grace for those who own up to their own bankruptcy (Lk. 18:9-14). His story-parable of the generous employer makes it clear that God is utterly free to be gracious (Mt. 20:1-16). In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), Jesus contrasts the language, "you have heard," with his claim, "But I say to you" (Mt. 5:21-48). The Pharisees stress their withdrawal from the world, while Jesus reveals an open stance to the world, with his radical inclusion of all persons, particularly the marginalized.

Concurrently, Jesus speaks and acts with accommodation or qualification of his controversial approaches. While he affirms the ongoing validity of Torah, he is also aware that Scripture can become an idolatrous end in itself. Nevertheless, his critics refuse personal attachment to him, the one who offers life in the fullest sense (Jn. 5:39-40). He argues that Torah is a means to an end—relationship with him—not an end in itself. Teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are not to be understood as a set of laws that bind the people of God. Rather, they offer pictures of the way of life of the people of God, e.g., words are to be honest, without needed appeal to an oath formula (Mt. 5:33-37). When oaths are added on, they communicate the telling reality that the people of God do not always tell the truth.

Jesus argues that the starting point of religious activity is found in the new relationship with him; he does not abrogate Torah, but expresses the necessary and responsible conduct in keeping with the new relationship. The Parable of the Two Builders (Mt. 7:24-27) indicates that the authentic response to Jesus' entire Sermon is hearing and *doing* His words.[9] In 5:19, Jesus says that whoever *does* one of the least commandments and teaches others shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. The language of doing/practicing presupposes the new relationship that he offers. There are occasions where Jesus honors Moses' injunction that lepers show themselves to the priest for verification (Mk. 1:44), while he himself disobeys Mosaic prohibition against contact with lepers (Lev. 13-14). Although grace reigns supreme in Jesus' witness, he emphasizes that conscious neglect of society's broken people means that one has consciously sided with the Devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41). While Jesus affirms the marital union, he also reveals that divorce is a divine accommodation in situations of a hardened human heart (Deut. 24:1ff; Mk. 10:5). Divorce does not reflect God's primary intent in creation but reflects his accommodation to broken people in a broken world.

Impressions of his serenity. Jesus also breathes serenity to his followers and opponents; he not only teaches the meaning of peace in the broadest sense of the term, but he embodies and conveys wellbeing to others. For example, Jesus quells the rage and violence of the demoniac(s). Here are those individuals that are unable to be stilled through medical means or brute strength. Mark clearly expresses the contrast between the Gerasene demoniac's pitiful existence (Mk. 5:2-8) before the exorcism and his new existence, after the dramatic exorcism. The freed demoniac is now, "sitting, clothed and in his right mind." (Mk. 5:14). He then proclaims what the Lord had done for him (Mk. 5:19ff; Lk. 8:39). In several instances of healing or forgiveness, Jesus conveys peace to the various individuals, subsequent to his acts of grace. Jesus' confrontation with religious leaders about the woman taken in adultery, issues in an authoritative word of forgiveness, peace, and a silencing of her accusers (Jn. 8:2-11). Jesus empowers his disciples with peace before his departure, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (Jn. 14:27; see also Jn. 20:20-21).

Jesus' accusers are likewise met with his peaceful responses. Frequently, they come for the express purpose of challenge or dispute; Jesus refuses to be drawn into disputes but clearly sets the general tone of the debate as he points to major issues. He does not allow for the conversations to degenerate into mere scolding or "put-down." In one instance, Jesus refuses to be drawn into a squabble over a family inheritance, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" (Lk. 12:14); instead, he concerns himself with the more serious issue of covetousness.

Varied Human Responses To Jesus, Expressed Through Verbs And Nouns

People respond to Jesus in various ways and also variously react in different settings. The Evangelist draw on various verbs and related noun forms to express differing human responses:

[9] The verb "to do, practice" (ποιεῖν) is found 19 times in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Fear" (noun, φόβος) and "to fear/to be afraid" (verb, φοβεῖσθαι), "dare" (τολμᾶν). The disciples' response to Jesus walking on water is one of "fear," since they think they are seeing a ghost, causing them to cry out in terror" (Mk. 6:48-50). Similarly, the disciples are afraid to ask Jesus about the meaning of the Passion Pronouncement (Lk. 9:45; Mk. 10:32). Onlookers express a "fearful response" to Jesus' authority to forgive the sins and to heal the paralytic, but also express themselves in positive form, "they glorified God who gave such authority to men" (Mt. 9:8). Jesus' imperative, "Do not fear," is intended to encourage Peter, since it is linked with the promise, "from now on, you will be a fisher of men" (Lk. 5:10). The high priests and scribes likewise "were afraid" to act with clear resolve to put Jesus to death (Mk. 11:18). The verb, "to dare" (τολμᾶν), is only used in negative contexts when disciples or opponents "do not dare" to ask Jesus about something (Mt. 22:46; Lk. 20:40).

This fear of judgment befalls the demons/demoniacs in Jesus' presence, "What do we have in common, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are, the Holy One of God" (Mk. 1:24). The two demoniacs of Gadara/Gerasenes cry out, "What do we have in common, Son of God? Have you come to torment us *before the time*?" (πρὸ καιροῦ Mt. 8:29). Even though Jesus' presence evokes demonic-confession, he silences them, since confessions of faith can only come through free persons—not coerced demons. The demoniacs' reaction indicates that the presence of Jesus not only breaks up demonic power in the present age, but that very presence portends the future destruction of evil powers. Elsewhere Jesus proclaims the inevitable and inescapable nature of the coming judgment, evoking a sense of fear and sober realism (Mt. 25:46; Jn. 5:29; Mt. 10:15; Lk. 10:12; Mt. 11:24; Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28ff; Mt. 13:42; Mt. 24:30 par.); judgment is the consequence of freely rejecting Jesus' person and the relationship he offers. Many of Jesus' audiences do not fully realize that the fear they feel in Jesus' presence is evoked by the supreme purpose that God assigns to him; ultimately their free response to the crisis of his person results in salvation or judgment

"Awe/amazement" (noun, θάμβος) and "to be filled with awe/amazement" (verb, θαμβεῖσθαι). In Mk. 1:27, the verb express the onlookers' response to Jesus' teaching with authority coupled with his ability to exorcise the demoniac (noun form in Lk. 4:36).[10] His authority is evident in his teaching in that it is immediate, expressed through the contrast between Rabbinic or prophetic teaching: "You have heard it said…. But I say to you" (Mt. 5:21-48). The verb also expresses the disciples' "amazement" at Jesus' word to the rich young ruler and his assessment of the real danger facing the rich (Mk. 10:24). The emotive response also characterizes the disciples as they go up with Jesus to Jerusalem, leading up to Jesus' third passion pronouncement (Lk. 10:32). After the amazing catch of fish, the noun also expresses Peter's sense of personal distance from Jesus, since he regards himself as a sinful man (Lk. 5:8-9).

"To marvel" (verb, θαυμάζειν). In a number of instances, the verbal form captures the idea of marvel or astonishment. Thus, the disciples respond with astonishment at this one who is able to calm the storm (Mt. 8:27; Lk. 8:25); and they become aware of Jesus' "otherness," i.e. his numinous authority to speak a word and calm a storm. The verb expresses the crowd's marveling of Jesus' ability to exorcise and heal a deaf and dumb mute

[10] Lk. 4:36 And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power (ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ καὶ δυνάμει) he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."

(Mt. 9:33; Lk. 11:14) and also of the disciples' response to Jesus' dialogue with a Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:27).

The verb "to be perplexed/in fear" or "to be surprised" (*ἐκπλήσσεσθαι*). While, the verb refers to those in the Capernaum synagogue (Mk. 1:22; Lk. 4:32), who are perplexed at Jesus' authority to teach, it also covers their reaction to the exorcism, also related to his authoritative teaching (Mk. 1:27). It expresses the perplexity of the crowd that has listened to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:28) or the crowd that is surprised/perplexed at Jesus' wisdom, mighty works in His Nazareth hometown (Mt. 13:54; Mk. 6:2). The crowd expresses surprise at Jesus' teaching of the resurrection (Mt. 22:33) and the Cleansing of the Temple (Mk. 11:18).

"To be overwhelmed with excitement" (*verb, ἐξίστασθαι*) *or "overwhelming excitement"* (*noun, ἔκστασι"*). The verb refers to people's profound excitement with this Jesus who has forgiven the paralytic's sins, who then demonstrates his authority to forgive sins through the healing of the paralytic. Both the verb and noun are used as cognate forms with reference to the witnesses of Jairus' daughter, whom Jesus has raised from the dead (Mk. 5:42). The verb narrates his family's response that he was "out of his mind" (Mk. 3:21), the same reply of his opponents (though the verb is μαίνεσθαι Jn. 10:20). The verb communicates the disquieted response from the disciples when Jesus walks on water (Mk. 6:51), negatively interpreted, "for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened" (Mk. 6:52). It captures the disciples' anxiety about entering the Kingdom of God, since Jesus has warned them about the great difficulty of a rich man being able to enter the Kingdom (Mt. 19:25). Finally, the verb communicates the effect of the women's witness to the Risen Lord, "some women of our company utterly *amazed* us" (Lk. 24:22).

The verb "to worship/prostrate oneself" (*προσκυνεῖν*). There are occasions where people fall to their knees and/or worship Jesus. The context generally dictates whether the physical act of prostration is regarded as the relative act of humble supplication, genuine worship, or even mockery. Mark narrates that the leper "fell to his knees" (γονυπετῶν Mk. 1:41), while Matthew says that "he knelt/worshipped before him" (προσεκύνει Mt. 8:2), prior to his specific request. The father who pleads for his epileptic son (demon-possessed) "kneels" (γονυπετῶν) before Jesus before he makes his specific request on behalf of his son. The rich young ruler "falls upon his knees" (γονυπετήσας), probably out of deference to Jesus who may provide the answer as to how he may inherit eternal life (Mk. 10:17). The verbal expression with the noun narrates Peter's physical and spiritual response to the miraculous catch of fish. He splashed his way through the water to land, where "he fell to his knees" (προσέπεσεν τοῖς γόνασιν Lk. 5:8) before Jesus. The form, "they worshipped" (προσεκύνουν) describes the soldiers' mockery of Jesus, this time referring to their mocking physical actions, joined with their clothing Jesus with a purple robe (a sign of kingship), striking him in the face with a reed, spitting on him, and placing a crown of thorns upon his head—all shameful behavior of feigned mockery.

"To grumble" (verb, γογγύζειν), "schism" (noun, σχίσμα), "to be moved with indignation" (ἀγανακτεῖν), "to offend (verb σκανδαλίζω), "to take offence at" (verb σκανδαλίζεσθαι ἐν), "offense, stumbling block" (noun σκάνδαλον). Murmuring or grumbling is the frequent response of Jesus' critics. In Luke 5:30, the Pharisees and Scribes "grumble/murmur" against Jesus for his table-fellowship with tax-collectors and known

sinners. Jesus aggressively heals a man with a withered hand, and is grieved at the leaders' "hard hearts," even before the healing (Mk. 3:5; Mt. 12:14; a vicious plot is also evident in Mt. 26:3-5; Mk. 14:1-2). The verb "murmur/grumble" is frequently used to describe the reaction of many of Jesus' opponents or would be followers, e.g., after the feeding of the five thousand (Jn. 6:41, 43, 61). The verb "to be moved with indignation" (ἀγανακτεῖν) communicates the response of others, religious leaders, the crowd and even his disciples to Jesus' actions or his words. In Mt. 21:15, the verb refers to the indignant comeback of the High Priests and Scribes to Jesus' Triumphal Entry. The synagogue president resents Jesus' healing of a crippled woman on the Sabbath (Lk. 13:14). From his vantage point, Jesus should have chosen another day to heal her. The disciples themselves are annoyed with the presumed waste of money in the anointing of Jesus with such expensive oil (Mk. 13:3-4). And the disciples are argue with each other about positions of requested prominence in the coming Kingdom of God (Mt. 21:24).

The noun "schism" (σχίσμα) in the Fourth Gospel refers to the divergent reactions of people and their leaders towards Jesus (Jn. 7:43; 9:16; 10:19), since he often confronts people with a "crisis" (κρίσις) of decision (Jn. 3:19-21). The σκαναλ—word family expresses both the active sense of "causing another to stumble" while the passive form (also deponent) conveys the idea of "being led into sin" or "taking offence." The forms narrate the fickle response to Jesus when commitment to Jesus collides with "suffering or persecution (Mt. 13:21) or the limiting response of Nazareth's inhabitants at Jesus' presence (Mt. 13:57). On occasion, the Pharisees are deeply offended by Jesus' teaching about the origin of evil. Jesus claims that they are not only blind leaders of the blind, but are a devilish plant, which must be rooted up (Mt. 15:12-15). Even the disciples will be offended at Jesus, for he solemnly says, "this night you will all have doubts about me, i.e., lose your faith in me" (Mt. 26:31). As the disciples lose their focus and centre and then panic, they will experience their disruption of their fellowship with Jesus. Peter cannot accept this sad pronouncement and thus, avows his loyalty, even if the other disciples "fall away" (Mt. 26:33). Earlier, Peter's rejection of the first passion pronouncement, constitutes a "stumbling-block" for Jesus, and thus, Peter is called "Satan" (Mt. 16:23). In various charges to the disciples, Jesus teaches his own that they must avoid creating "stumbling-blocks," and thereby, cause others to disbelieve Jesus.

"To trust/entrust" (*verb, πιστεύω*), *"faith/trust"* (*noun, πίστις*). Many stories link "trust" with Jesus' saving help. Faith makes its appearance in unlikely places through many unlikely people. Correspondingly, trust is strangely absent in other environments, where people "know better" or should know better. Jesus offers no faith-formula, creedal dogma, recipe, or program; yet he is constantly alert, seeking to stimulate and deepen the trust of people in himself as they able to entrust themselves in committed relationship with him. Numerous stories highlight expressions of trust to Jesus with various nuances.

On occasion, *faith means a personal trust in Jesus that God is acting through Jesus in a special way and that the hoped-for Kingdom of God* (*"dream of God"*) *has arrived in his person, words, and works.* Since the gospel expresses that the turning point of the ages has arrived and the Kingdom of God is present, people are summoned to "repent" and "trust" in the good news with the radical newness that Jesus offers (Mk. 1:14-15). God takes the initiative and a readiness to trust means that people have genuinely heard and have freely accepted him and the divine invitation.

Faith is linked with an abiding "faithfulness," or fidelity in the midst of life's ambiguities and struggles, expressed in Jesus' refusal to assign blame for suffering and tragedy (Lk. 13:1-5; Jn. 9:1-3). The twin story-parables of The Widow and Unjust Judge (Lk. 18:1-8) and the Persistent Neighbor (Lk. 11:5-13) highlight the need for *faithful and persistent prayer*. At the conclusion of the first parable, Jesus concludes with the rhetorical question, "And when the Son of Man comes will he find *the faith* (persistent faith)? (Lk. 18:8). Jesus honors the faith and wisdom of a humble yet persistent Syro-Phoenician woman with a demon-possessed daughter (Mt. 15:28), "great is your faith." When Jesus prophesies of Peter's forthcoming three-fold denial, he has already prayed for Peter that his "faith (faithfulness or loyalty) will not fail" (Lk. 22:31).

Faith means trust in Jesus' miraculous power to meet human needs (a paralytic Mk. 2:1-12; a hemorrhaging woman for twelve years or a daughter who has died (Mk. 5:24b-43), disciples fearing drowning at sea (Mk. 4:35-41). By way of contrast, a practical failure to entrust oneself to Jesus is a sign of an unbelieving generation (Mt. 17:17).

Faith also includes trust in Jesus' involved and holistic concern for people. For Jesus, God is no remote deity who has wound up the clock of the universe allowing it to tick as it will. Instead he is especially near to those who need love and mercy, concrete help in all areas of human life, and grace—qualities that only a responsive person can express. Jesus makes war on all fronts of human distortion, such as sin, paralysis, disease, marginalization, demon-possession, and death, and thereby reveals God's holistic and saving activity for broken people in a broken world. His offer of the Kingdom of God announces God's dream for his people or his proclamation of the way that life is to be lived.

Trust is also humble and understands Jesus' authority (the wayward son "I am no longer worthy…" [Lk. 15:18f.]; the Centurion—"I am not worthy…" [Mt. 8:8, 10]; hemorrhaging woman—falling down before Jesus and "telling him the whole truth" [Mk. 5:3]; the Syro-Phoenician woman's dogged determination [Mk. 7:28]). Jesus affirms the Centurion's faith as a buoyant confidence in Jesus' authority, "not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Mk. 8:10; Lk. 7:9). He then uses this occasion to indict the "religious" persons, who may confess articles of faith, but who are excluded from the Messianic banquet (Mt. 8:12). The father of a demon-possessed (epileptic) son confesses his faith, but is also aware of faith's opposite—unbelief, and thereby asks Jesus to help him with his unbelief (Mk. 9:24).

Faith also means gratitude. Of ten healed lepers, there is only one, an outcast Samaritan, who feels a deep-seated gratitude to God (Lk. 17:15) and to Jesus (16). For him, healing is incomplete without a verbal thanksgiving to his benefactors. His thanksgiving prompts Jesus' haunting and sad question, "Where are the other nine?" (17-18). To the healed leper, he affirms, "Your faith has saved you" (19). The perfect tense, "has saved" intimates far more than deliverance from the scourge of leprosy, since the other nine were still in a healed condition. His wholeness is a deeper experience due to his grateful response. The sinful woman, who expresses such vulnerable and lavish gratitude for Jesus' forgiveness, is honored for such appreciation, "Your faith has saved you" (Lk. 7:50).

Jesus also says that *faith can effect the miraculous, even do the impossible* in a number of mountain-moving sayings (Mk. 11:22-23; 17:19-20; Mk. 9:28-29; Mt. 21:21; mulberry tree in

Lk. 17:5-6). Because of the inconceivable power of faith, "all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted to you" (Mk. 11:24).

In the Fourth Gospel, the verb "to trust" is found nearly a hundred times and is expressed so clearly in John's purpose statement, " these [signs] are written, that you may continue to believe…(Jn. 20:30-31). At times, the signs lead to a trusting response (2:11; 9:35-36; 11:45), while on other occasions, signs are met with unbelief and hostility (12:37). The verb is twice used with a double-entendre in Jn. 2:23-24; while people "*believed in his name*, when they saw the signs, which he did, Jesus "*would not believe* in them" (*would not entrust* himself to them). For them, signs produced a superficial response of sensationalism, which regarded the signs as "wonders" (τέρατα). In the Fourth Gospel, the verb signifies both an initial entrustment followed by a corresponding growth in discipleship (Nathaniel in 1:49-51; Nicodemus in chapters 3:1-15, 7:50-51, 19:38-42). The Evangelist appears to portray stages of faith, expressed so well in cha. 9 when the blind man moves from literal blindness to spiritual sight and worship at the end of the story (9:35-38). "One gains the impression that Jesus is constantly asking, 'What may I do to strengthen the faith of those who believe and bring about the inception of faith of those who do not believe.'"[11] Such concern for genuine trust clearly surfaces in the Lazarus-story, with its focus on the disciples, Martha, the believing onlookers, the unbelieving crowds, and the religious authorities (11:4, 15, 25-27, 40-45; 12:11). Growth in trust is a chief concern in Jesus' High Priestly prayer (17:8, 20, 21). Step by step, Jesus leads people into deeper relationship with him as he entrusts himself to them and they to him, to the extent that they live in a position of "friendship" (15:13-15) and "trust." The verb, "abide" (μένω) is used so pointedly (40 times in the Fourth Gospel). By way of contrast, unbelief is serious business and the consequences are disastrous (3:18, 36).

"To hear" (verb ἀκούειν), "report" (noun ἀκοή). The gospels strongly emphasize the believing response inherent in "genuine hearing." Various parables of "hearing" and "listening" in Mk. 4 affirm the all-importance of proper listening (13 times). To "the one who has," i.e., "who listens and appropriates what is heard"—more will be given, all out of proportion to what was initially heard (Mk. 4:24). Physical hearing and true hearing of the message of grace are distinguished by the presence or absence of "trust" (Mt. 8:10; 9:2; 17:20). Proper hearing likewise results in "doing the words of Jesus" (Mt. 7:16, 24, 26) in a relationship of mutual knowledge with the Father. Charismatic activity apart from relationship with Jesus or the Father leads to the indictment, "Away from me, for I never knew you" (Mt. 7:23).

"To receive" (verb λαμβάνειν, compound παραλαμβάνειν), "to welcome/receive" (verb δέχεσθαι). The three verbs express the free-will decisions that people make, whether they receive or reject Jesus. The verb "take" or "receive" and its compound occur for a total of 171 times in the gospels. The verb "welcome, receive" occurs for a total of 71 times and is used to express the same positive response to Jesus, "to take on oneself" (Mt. 10:38), "to take up," or "to attach oneself to Jesus" (Jn. 3:11, 32f; 12:48; 17:8). Receiving or welcoming Jesus signifies personal attachment to him, and thereby, to God, an equivalent of "entrusting oneself to them." When the disciples are sent out in short-term mission-trips, they will know

[11] Story, 244.

that he is present in them as they seek to bring others into attachment with them, and with Jesus and God (Mt. 10:40ff.). These "welcome"-sayings express the Semitic law of the messenger, "The emissary of a man is as the man himself." The same principle holds true for children (Mt. 18:5 par.); attachment to a child means attachment to Jesus and to God. The verbs express Jesus' invitation, which positions people for their libertarian and free-will-decision to welcome or reject.

"To repent" (*verb, μετανοεῖν*), *"repentance"* (*noun, μετάνοια*), *"to repent"* (*verb μεταμέλεσθαι*), *"to grieve"* (*verb λυπεῖν*), *"grief"* (*noun λύπη*). The various terms express a feeling-response of remorse, a stirring of the whole person, a radical change and transformation of the way people relate to Jesus, to God, and to others, expression of conversion itself.[12] People turn from evil and turn to God with resolution (Mk. 1:15; 4:17; 8:23). Such transformation affects the centre of one's personal life, thoughts, words, and actions, in all times and situations (Mt. 12:33ff. par; 23:26; Mk. 7:15 par.). When people approach Jesus with repentance, they not only turn from evil, but embrace the new and holistic lifestyle and relationship that Jesus offers. When people enter into relationship with Jesus in his invitation (Mt. 11:28), they are promised a personal transformation, expressed well in Jesus' thanksgiving prayer (Mt. 11:25-30). Repentance no longer means "law" that burdens people, but good news. Bonhoeffer plays down the traditional idea of repentance as a religious act or method, laying stress on the positive side of "allowing oneself to be caught up into the way of Jesus Christ."[13]

While these verbs and nouns do not provide a comprehensive picture of the totality of human responses to Jesus, they do express the diverse and profound effect of Jesus' presence among people and his desire for a relationship with them. These verbs and noun forms are not captured in the various Christological titles used for Jesus. Instead, the forms express the complexity of the human response. They describe the various impressions that Jesus makes upon his disciples, adversaries, and crowds. The crucial concern is the impression he makes upon various individuals that he encounters as he seeks relationship with them. This issue should serve as the beginning point for coming to grips with the mystery of Jesus' person. While the Evangelists use Christological titles to express Jesus' identity, the titles are nonetheless subservient to the experiential impression that Jesus makes upon the varied encounters he has, whether with a learned Jew (Jn. 3) or a simple Samaritan woman (Jn. 4). Jesus is the one who makes a profound impact upon others, who, in turn, are to reckon with his remarkable presence; he cannot be casually ignored or dismissed. Through his relatedness with others, their lives cannot remain the same. People are forced to deal with this person in an altogether new way. People reflect a strange mixture of majesty and frightfulness, attractiveness and repulsion, acceptance and rejection. In essence, the Evangelists "tell the story" of how Jesus is perceived by people and how they respond to the mystery of Jesus when he seeks relationship with them.

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[12] Behm, G., "μετανοέω" and cognates. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. IV.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans' Publishing Co., 1969), 1000.

[13] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison,* ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller and others, rev. ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), 190.

Titles By Which People Address Jesus

It is striking that in the gospels, people rarely address Jesus by his first name; most of these occasions are voiced by various demons (Mk. 1: 24 par.; 5:7). Other isolated occurrences are voiced by Bartimaeus (10:47 par.) and ten lepers (Lk. 17:13). Instead, the Evangelists narrate the various encounters using honorable titles:

"Teacher" (*διδάσκαλος*). It is the title that the disciples frequently use of Jesus in times of great need, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mk. 4:39). Elsewhere, it is used when they seek an answer to a question or problem, e.g., "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he was not following us" (Mk. 9:38). Clearly they are seeking approval for what they have just done, but instead, they are rebuked. On other occasions, opponents in an atmosphere of conflict, also address Jesus, "Teacher, we desire to see a sign from you" (Mt. 12:38), "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully" (Mt. 22:16).

"Rabbi" (*ῥαββί or ῥαββουνί*). The disciples call Jesus "Rabbi" in human terms, "Rabbi, the fig-tree you cursed is withered" (Mk. 11:21); "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (Jn. 9:2), or the title is used as part of an exalted confession, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel" (Jn. 1:49-50). On other occasions, those who are outside of the group of disciples address Jesus as "Rabbi," which is coupled with the term "Teacher," "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher…," by Nicodemus in his initial conversation with Jesus (Jn. 3:2). Mary Magdalene makes a similar response to the Risen Jesus, "she says to him, 'Rabbouni,' (which is being translated, "Teacher") in Jn. 20:16.

"Lord" (*κύριος*). Sometimes, the term "Lord" is used in a weakened sense of "Sir": "Sir, you have nothing to draw with" (Jn. 4:11), "Sir, give me this water" (Jn. 4:15), "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet" (Jn. 4:19)—all of these by the Samaritan woman; "Sir, come down before my child dies" (Jn. 4:49)—by a Gentile official; "Sir, I have no one to put me in the water" (Jn. 5:7)—by the paralytic at the pool. On other occasions, the term "Lord" is used with an exalted sense, and is frequently paired up with other forms of address: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come to my house" (Mt. 8:8), "Lord, save us, we are perishing" (Mt. 8:25); "Oh Lord, thou Son of David" (Mt. 15:22); "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" (Mk. 9:24); "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28).

"Master" (*ἐπιστάτης*). The address to Jesus as "Master" is unique to Luke: "Master, we have toiled all night and have caught nothing" (Lk. 5:5); "Master, Master, we perish" (Lk. 8:24); "Master, it is good for us to be here" (Lk. 9:33); "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Lk. 17:13). There are a number of places in the gospels where addresses are interchangeable, e.g.,

Mt. 8:25	Mk. 4:38	Lk. 8:24
"Save, *Lord* (κύριε); we are perishing."	"*Teacher* (διδάσκαλε), do you not care if we perish?"	"*Master, Master* (ἐπιστάτα, ἐπιστάτα), we are perishing."

Other titles or impressions. Other persons go far beyond these titles of honor and respect—both positive and negative. In early Christian preaching, Peter recounts the fact

that Jesus was able to do the things he did and said since "God was with him" (Acts. 10:38). Nathaniel addresses Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel" (Jn. 1:49). At Caesarea Philippi, Peter witnesses," You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt. 16:18 par.). Thomas responds to the Risen Jesus, "my Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28); others affirmed Jesus as the Christ (Mk. 8:29; Mt. 16:18; Lk. 9:20. Others, including Herod said that Jesus was John the Baptist, John the Baptist *Redivivus*, Elijah, or another prophet (Mk. 6:14ff; Lk. 9:7-9; Mt. 14:1). Some of the hostile onlookers accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul and in collusion with him (Mk. 3:22; Mt. 12:24; Lk. 11:15; Jn. 8:48; 10:21). Various voices from Jesus' environment reveal the powerful impression that Jesus makes upon individuals and groups.

Some Implications

The condition of the human heart is the recurring reason why human reactions are so diverse. Jesus says that the human heart serves as the origin for the ways in which different people view him, and they, of course, are responsible for their free choices. For instance, in the Parable of the Soils, the seed is the same that falls on four different types of soil. The varied conditions of the soil determine whether the seed will or will not be productive. Various soils are responsible for their condition, whether they are impervious, shallow, beset with distraction, or single-minded. When Jesus speaks to his disciples about the issue of defilement, he specifies that the heart is the inner source or origin of "evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery…All these things come from within, and they defile a man" (Mk. 7:21-23).

Notably in John's Gospel, the coming of Jesus effects a "crisis" (κρίσις). People either refuse the "light" out of hatred and fear of self-exposure, or they come to the light with openness and vulnerability (Jn. 3:19-20). The condition of the human heart and the free choices that people make, predispose them to respond in various and even contradictory ways. Some respond superficially because their heart is not right. Others respond with fear and hatred because they are aware of the greatness of Jesus but cannot bring themselves to make a free decision for him. Others reveal attraction and love because they possess an inner disposition to receive and be transformed.

In human experience, power often separates people, whether the power is political, military, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, or charismatic. Expressions of power heighten a contrast between the "haves" and the "have-nots." A key reason for such separation is that the powerful person will use power as the "patron" of power, who possesses the right to coerce others. Those who are attracted to the powerful person will then align themselves with this person to receive the attending benefits for the betterment of their own condition. Jesus' use of power is markedly different. He does not begin his ministry with displays of power to stun people with his superiority. He immediately summons disciples to himself with whom he could share his life. He lives in the context of human relationships when he personally engages people. They come to Jesus out of great need. And when they find that Jesus meets their need, their contact with him fosters a greater relationship, attachment, and allegiance. Thus, even his use of power pales in comparison with the personal interest in them and in the new relationships he offers. People gradually learn that Jesus conveys a qualitative newness of life for those who have made a personal commitment to him; they are promised "a hundredfold now in this time—houses, brothers, sisters and mothers, children

and lands." Thereby, he points to the excellence of the new life, which is infinitely superior to what they have previously known: "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses" (Lk. 12:15, 21).

Jesus amazes people through his person, words, and works. His words affect his hearers and reveal a qualitative difference from the words of the learned. While religious persons discuss what one ought to be and do, Jesus talks about human life and how to find meaning in the relational give-and-take of life. He heals people without ostentation, personal propaganda, or profit. His miracles signify the original condition that God intended for humanity. His very person is an enigma to his contemporaries. Even those who are attracted to him are not immediately able to understand him (Lk. 2:50; Jn. 2:27; 7:20, 35; 8:22). There is no end to the various expressions of misunderstanding and doubt, even among his disciples. There is always a certain mixture of genuine belief and unbelief (Mk. 9:24; Lk. 24:37; Mt. 28:17), even with the post-resurrection appearances of the Risen Lord.

The complexity of the human response to Jesus is directly related to the complexity of Jesus. He belongs, yet he does not belong to human categories. The mystery of Jesus originates in his own ambiguity. Even those who attach themselves to Jesus and commit themselves to him, are unable to fully understand him (Lk. 2:50; Jn. 2:27; 7:20, 35; 8:22). There is an initial commitment of trust and also an ongoing growth that occurs in them as they grapple with the mystery of his person. Some move beyond an initial understanding of Jesus as a miracle worker (Jn. 2:11) to a fuller declaration of Jesus' Messiahship and divine Sonship (Mt. 16:18 par.). Our Western thinking often equates "faith" with mental assent to the various Christological titles. However, the Evangelists interpret the Jesus-story in fully relational encounters: how he was perceived by others and how they responded to him. The story reveals that Jesus was "the man for others,"[14]—in the language of relationality.

It is hoped that these reflections on the gospels enable others to understand and experience Jesus in his full relationality, who also directs his audience, then and now, to "feel" the full sociality of God. God is passionate about relationship with his audience. Instead of "evangelism outlines," which are reductionistic and propositional in nature, the Jesus-story offers another approach, a style that speaks to people, in need of relationship with God, with others in the Christian community and citizens of the world. God takes the full initiative in His gift of His son, who personally approaches others and seeks to elicit responses of love, trust, and faithful obedience. He honors the freedom of others to make the decisions and experience the consequences of their decisions. The beginning point for human framing of Christology surely needs to be understood within the context of relationality.

[14] Bonhoeffer, 240.

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Example:

An example of one vocabulary word may help illustrate the approach: Observe the Greek vocabulary word, pronounced e-gei-row, and it means "I raise up." A young would-be Robin Hood says, "I raise up an egg-arrow" ("I raise up").

THE POSTMODERN CONDITION AS A RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Ryan McIlhenny[1]

The ghosts of skeptical philosophers like David Hume or Bertrand Russell are likely chagrined right now that religion has withstood the onslaught of the Enlightenment project. Indeed, one of the benefits of Western culture's "postmodern condition" is that it has produced a revival of religion in the academic community. Modern thought, the brainchild of the Enlightenment, failed in its promise to emancipate humanity from the fetters of metaphysics. Given the scientific "rationalization" of war, genocide, the exploitative aspects of globalization in the twentieth century, and the collision of faiths after 9/11, it is understandable that many scholars express incredulity toward Reason's grand narrative. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer correctly put it in *Dialectics of Enlightenment,* "Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized."[2] "Enlightenment" became the very thing it tried to destroy: a religion. And in the course of this (not so) surprising discovery, what intellectuals once silenced as self-alienation and wish fulfillment is now clamoring for attention. Religion, including theology, demands not only a place at the intellectual table, but also integration in all areas of belief and practice.

Religion is most often presented as a mere social and psychological phenomenon, offering a program whereby individuals and communities can get through the rigors of life. The study religion in the contemporary context is nothing more than a supposedly detached or objective look into the habits and core beliefs of a specific community. The unpardonable sin of religious studies departments is to actually consider the truth of belief. While functional elements are important, there is more to religion that (literally) meets the eye. Have we forgotten that there are metaphysical realities that correspond to belief? Does God exist? Is there a specific God, one that we can identify by name? Is he active, not some epiphenomenon of human culture? Can Christians, for instance, truly know and have confidence in Christ's atoning work on the cross? For many, religious beliefs are outside the boundaries of knowledge; verification is futile. When it comes to the realities of the heavenly realm, those who bow the knee to Reason cannot—or perhaps should not—make a definitive decision. God is beyond their reasonable limits.

The practice of suspending judgment when it comes to faith-based issues has unsettled many in the scholarly community. Historian Eugene Genovese, for instance, admitted his inability in *Roll, Jordan, Roll* to move beyond the religious functionalism set down by his own craft: "the overpowering evidence of religious faith aroused in me a skepticism about the reigning tendency in academia…to, as it were, sociologize faith *out of religion—to deny the reality of spirituality.*"[3] Criticized by a handful of his colleagues "for slighting the spiritual dimension of the slaves' experience," Genovese pointed to the restrictions of the

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[2] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr and trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University, 2002), 11.

[3] Eugene Genovese, "Marxism, Christianity, and Bias in the Study of Southern Slave Society" in D. G. Hart eds., *Religious Advocacy and American History,* 90.

historical discipline, "a deficiency of talent, not of intention." Frustrated by his own materialism, Genovese ultimately concluded that "slaves' successful struggle for survival," galvanized by religion, was "more readily spiritual than physical."[4] I often wonder whether religious agnosticism among higher education professors stems from an epistemological *inability* or an ethical *unwillingness* to understand and incorporate the dynamics of faith in a particular discipline.

The protean term "postmodern" invokes notions of confusion, chaos, and contradiction: epistemology is disregarded; morality is relative; and language is slippery. Reality is a social construction, and "truth" is nothing more than what our academic colleagues let us get away with. Few religious observers see any value in our current cultural, social, and intellectual state. Yet, inadvertently, postmodernism has been a boon to religion.

Overturning the errors of modern thought, a few well-respected contemporary thinkers who refuse to simply add to the dissonant clamor of critique have developed some creative ways in which to understand religion that, at first glance, *seem* "postmodern." Political scientist William Connolly, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, and philosopher Alvin Plantinga have offered different conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of religion that are essentially de-centered, pluralistic, and anti-foundational—all the ingredients to make a modern positivist cringe. Their work underscores the important idea that modernism has for years neglected to recognize religion as a necessary component of one's proper understanding of the present social world.

Secularism's Dogma

Directly challenging the hegemony of Enlightenment secularism in his book, *Why I am Not a Secularist,* a title that plays on Bertrand Russell's *Why I am Not a Christian,* William Connolly underscores the importance of religion as a public phenomenon.[5] Modern thought has created a false dichotomy between a supposed secular/public realm and a sacred/private one. The author defines secularism as the "wish to provide an authoritative and self-sufficient public space equipped to regulate and limit 'religious' disputes in public life."[6] Yet in its attempts to do so, secularism, Connolly argues, has become exactly what it initially sought to overthrow: a dogma stemming from an overconfidence—call it blind faith—in reason that excludes those who fail to abide by it. Connolly's goal is to de-center the center, to sweep away the idea of a homogenous core in order to incorporate a plurality of ideologies.

In an illustrative, though frankly odd, way, Connolly's project relies on the work of neurophysiologist Joseph LeDoux. For LeDoux not even the brain is, strictly speaking, "rational" or dispassionate in an "enlightened" sense. Examining the relationship between the "thought-imbued intensities" of the amygdala, "an almond-shaped brain located at the base of the cortex," and the prefrontal cortex, the mind constantly exhibits irrational impulses. When receiving signs and stimuli, the amygdala reacts "quickly, relatively crudely, and with intense energy…below the level of conscious judgment and feeling"; the prefrontal

[4] Id.

[5] William Connolly, *Why I am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999)

[6] Ibid., 5.

cortex, in turn, receives such signs "more slowly, processing [them] through a sophisticated linguistic network in a more refined way and forming a more complex judgment."[7] One could say, hopefully without characterizing LeDoux's analysis, that the amygdala manifests immediate, intense, and inexplicable "pre-thoughts." Such impulses are not derived from rational deliberation, nor are they built on a series of core beliefs. With immediate vigor, they "just" happen, which then allows the prefrontal cortex to "organize *conceptually sophisticated translations of these* intensities and feelings."[8] Thus, an essential part of a properly functioning mind is irrationality or, to be more specific, *pre*-rationalism.

Each part of the brain has a specific function that works in conjunction with other parts. In this case, the cerebral (rational-making part) is dependent on the visceral: "it is for the most part a good thing the amygdala is wired to the cortex, for it imparts energy and intensity to that center needed for the latter's formation of representations and practical decisions."[9] In the end, LeDoux's point, according to Connelly, is that the "brain network is a rhizome [i.e., having multiple roots]…each with its own internal capacities, speeds, and relays with other brains."[10] The brain is multifaceted without one central core.

Removing the non-rational would not only misrepresent the rational, but it would significantly undermine our understanding of how the brain stimulates human interaction, which, according Connolly, is "always accompanied and informed…by visceral intensities of thinking, prejudice, and sensibility." [11] In this way, the author is not far from the biblical idea that the issues of life flow from the heart and mind. Society, like the brain, is multifaceted: it is irreducibly complex:

> When nervous cultural utilitarians insist that the organization of political action in concert would be impossible in a rhizomatic culture, they might learn a few things by examining how their own brains work. Micropolitics and relational self-artistry shuffle back and forth among intensities, feelings, images, smells, and concepts, modifying some of them and the relays connecting them, opening up, thereby, the possibility of new thinking and alterations of sensibility.[12]

To say that religion is deeply emotional or inter-subjective and that such "visceral registers of being" should be removed from the public realm for the sake of stoic, cerebral rationalism is to severely truncate a well-ordered social sphere.

Connolly, in my opinion, needs to explain further his concept of democratic pluralism, what he calls the "ethos of engagement," whereby the multiplicity of voices contributes to an enriching social and political environment. While he speaks the language of pragmatism, in that truth naturally arises from the democratic spray of opinion, Connolly fails to account for the willful suppression of religious claims. Nonetheless, he certainly furnishes a helpful alternative to secular thinking. Challenging the hubris of secularism necessarily reintroduces

[7] Ibid., 29.
[8] Ibid., 175. Emphasis is the author's.
[9] Ibid., 176
[10] Id.
[11] Ibid., 36.
[12] Ibid., 76.

the significance of religious beliefs. More importantly, the public sphere *must* open itself up to religious and spiritual dialogue. Is religion solely a private phenomenon? Should we leave our metaphysical beliefs at the threshold of the public arena? Connolly doesn't think so:

> [A]n overt metaphysical/religious pluralism in public life provides one key to forging a positive ethos of engagement out of the multidimensional plurality of contemporary life. In such a culture, participants are called upon neither to leave their metaphysical baggage at home when they participate in various public activities nor to adopt an overarching faith acknowledged by all parties who strive to promote the common good. Rather, a deep plurality of religious/metaphysical perspectives is incorporated into public discourse.[13]

The Subaltern's Divine

Historians too face the difficulty of re-conceptualizing religion in a postmodern age. Galvanized by dialectical thinking, subaltern history, also known as "history from below," highlights the symbiotic relationship between hegemonic and subordinate social groups in the development of unique social and cultural institutions. An essential goal of this school, often vilified for its revisionism, is to take seriously the place of the marginalized, to give them a voice (however true or imagined). The problem comes when that voice resounds with spiritualistic overtones.

Examining the interdependence of labor and religion among certain East Asian communities in his book, *Provincializing Europe,* Dipesh Chakrabarty reprimands the historical profession's relegation of the religious root of the subaltern's voice. For the twentieth-century materialist, labor, an essential part of the progress toward freedom, has been separated *a priori* from the dynamics of religion. Religion is not only backwards it alienates humanity from material change. According to Marx, true liberation follows the path of social labor and the gradual casting aside of heavenly speculations. Yet in many of the communities Chakrabarty analyzes, labor was a means of experiencing the divine, for "work and worship were two inseparable activities."[14]

This puts the historian, especially one who has been trained in the doctrines of materialism, in a troubling situation—namely, how to take seriously the subaltern's appeal to divine agency? "How," Chakrabarty asks, "do we [historians] handle the problem of the presence of the divine or the supernatural in the history of labor as we render this enchanted world into our disenchanted prose…And how do we, in doing this, retain the subaltern (in whose activity gods or spirits present themselves) as the subject of their histories?"[15] Claims of divine activity "cannot be mediated through the secular code of history—bereft of gods and spirits."[16] Western historians can only "grant the place of the supernatural, but to ascribe to it real agency in history will go against the historian's craft…[consequently] the

[13] Ibid., 185.

[14] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 79.

[15] Id.

[16] Ibid., 76.

historian…cannot invoke the supernatural in explaining/describing events."[17] Is it possible for us to think about God in the same way that we think about humans? Tracing the limits of a subject can be difficult (e.g., Who is God? or What is human nature?), but there *is* something there.

In order to overcome such limitations, Chakrabarty proposes a plurality of histories—specifically, the mutual existence of History 1 (H1) and History 2 (H2), two independent conceptual dimensions of time, which would mutually accommodate a western and an eastern history. The subaltern weakens the former's (secular) conceptualization that offers one universal time zone, wherein all social groups participate (H1). In the same way that colonial Europeans in North America assumed that they were more culturally advanced than their Native American hosts, western historians today are out of order when they consider the subaltern as somehow pre-modern, presupposing that they are on the same evolutionary trajectory toward liberation. "Thus the writing of history," Chakrabarty theorizes, "must implicitly assume a plurality of times existing together, a disjuncture of the present with itself."[18] History 2 is the time that overlaps History 1, but does not consume or collapse it in a kind of totalizing (or totalitarian) presupposition. Does this mean that we should give up H1 for H2? Certainly not—Chakrabarty's point is that H1 and H2 are valuable in their own right.[19]

A point of clarification is necessary at this point. Most people assume that history is a thing, an ontological organism. But the term "history" comes from the Greek word "inquiry," which can also be defined as "investigate." Thus, history is essentially an epistemological activity. The number of historians who argue that materialism and empiricism are the ultimate foundations on which their work rests always perplexes me. History is neither empirical nor material. Methodology, conceptualization, memory, and imagination are essential elements in the historian's tool kit. Given this understanding, it's appropriate to propose the existence of multiple and complementary histories. Consider for example four people at four different ends of a busy intersection, witnessing an accident. Each person's account of the incident, although different, paints a picture of the event as a whole. Such is the case, for example, with the four gospels of the New Testament. It's when one testimony sets itself up as *the* only authority—i.e., becomes the hegemonic discourse—that a bit of revision is healthy.

When dealing with religion, the materialist is akin to one who analyzes a language that he is not fully acquainted with. Having an intimate knowledge of a particular language is comparable to having an intimate understanding of the religion under examination. "The Marxist or secular scholar," Chakrabarty concludes, "who is translating the divine is in the place of the student who knows well only one of the two languages he is working with."[20] Knowing well one of two languages is inadequate. Similarly, in order to have a better understanding of a particular religion one must be conversant with its texts, community, and practices.

[17] Ibid., 104-105.
[18] Ibid., 109.
[19] Ibid., 113.
[20] Ibid., 90.

The Mind's Knowledge of God

Arguably, in the modern mind, philosophy and religion seem to be much stranger bedfellows. Yet much of what is dealt with in philosophy focuses on issues related to religion (God, evil, the soul, etc.). Notre Dame philosopher Alvin Plantinga, proponent of a system known as Reformed Epistemology, a mixture of Common Sense realism and Calvinistic theology, has spent much of his career dismantling traditional epistemology—the "justified true belief" paradigm.[21] The ultimate goal of his three-part series on warrant and proper function, which culminates in his final installment, *Warranted Christian Belief,* is to show that people are within their epistemic right to hold certain religious beliefs (e.g., the Christian God) without the use of external evidence, a coherent theory of knowledge, or the use of any theistic proofs. This rests on the fact that the mode of forming such beliefs about the divine is the same as when we form beliefs about other humans. For Plantinga, epistemology has been inconsistently applied for hundreds of years.

Warrant is often confused with the aspect of knowledge that is based on responsible cognitive ascent. According to the "deontological" theory of knowledge, it is wrong always and everywhere to accept a belief on insufficient evidence. The idea is that one can only know something if they can provide evidence for it. Anyone who cannot present reasons for what they believe is outside the legal limits of belief. In other words, I must be able to prove that 2+4=6 before I am allowed to give ascent to it. In this system, warrant is equivalent to justification. This is one reason why thinkers suspend judgment when it comes to religion: there's just not enough evidence, as Russell maintained.

For Plantinga, however, this will not do.[22] Warrant, also known as "positive epistemic status," is not the same as justification. Distinct from simply "truth," warranted beliefs are "not accepted on the evidential basis of other propositions" nor do they require external evidence (i.e., traditional epistemic justification): "To say that a belief is *warranted* or *justified* for a person is to evaluate it or him (or both) *positively;* his holding that belief in his circumstances is *right, or proper, or acceptable, or approvable, or up to standard."* Such core beliefs come in degrees. For instance, my belief that 2+2=4 is more warranted—that is, it is more weighty or central to my understanding of myself and the world around me—than the fact that the human brain depends on both the visceral and the cerebral for cognition. The

[21] There are a number of problems with the "justified true belief" paradigm. Let me highlight a couple. First, what constitutes "truth"? Quite often scholars have used the same evidence but have produced different truths? Rather than say true, let's use the term "cogent." The idea is that certain claims can be considered more persuasive than others, leaving open the possibility that our assumed "truth" may be overturned in the future. At this juncture, then, knowledge is "cogently justified belief." Second, what is meant by the term "justified"? There is a difference between "justified" and "justifiable." The former can convey the meaning that our claims are not groundless, while the latter suggests that we are required (i.e., duty-bound) to point out the justifying factors before giving cognitive ascent. Traditional philosophy has suggested the latter—namely, that justifiable proof precedes cognitive ascent. Therefore the paradigm should be "justifiable cogent belief." Only then can one say that belief is warranted.

[22] Plantinga doesn't reject justification. He just wants to separate it from warrant. Furthermore, Plantinga argues that our beliefs must be "grounded." We have no right to believe in just anything. But there are things that we can believe without external evidence.

belief that I was born and raised in San Francisco has a greater degree of epistemic status than the fact that Shakespeare was the author of *Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

For the Reformed Epistemologist, warranted beliefs are "properly basic." They are neither *a priori* nor universal, but are nonetheless appropriately formed in our minds. Memory beliefs, perceptual beliefs, or beliefs that ascribe certain mental states to people are immediate. They are occasioned in the mind in given circumstances to the degree that one cannot help but accept them. For instance, when Professor *S* speaks to me in class, I form a warranted belief that Professor *S* appears before me and speaks to me. It is a positive epistemic belief. Am I warranted (and justified) in holding the belief that I experience Professor *S*? Yes, of course. Yet did my mental state come from external evidence? No. My belief came from the experience itself. It required no external evidence, no epistemological theory, and—importantly—no prior proof of Professor *S*'s existence.

The argument supports the reality of a belief, but not the reality of the object. Yet most of our beliefs are formed without prior inquiry concerning the object's existence. Professor *S*'s existence is not properly basic. While this is true, it is important to understand that such a belief (viz., that professor *S* appeared to me at a point in the past) *entails* the existence of Professor *S*. My proper belief, to use another example, that I had breakfast this morning necessarily entails the belief that the world has existed for more than three hours. The belief that the world has existed for a given amount of time is not basic, but the formation of the belief after the particular experience is basic and therefore so is the world's existence. The point is that my belief, if it is properly basic and warranted, cannot be dismissed as an illusion.

A critic of Plantinga may ask: Is it possible for our minds to function properly but not acquire warranted knowledge? What if a person is hallucinating or suffering from a brain lesion? What if they are under the influence of an opiate? Plantinga answers these questions in his second book, *Warrant and Proper Function.* The mind functions in a specific way, in accordance with specific external circumstances (i.e., one's cognitive environment), and according to a designed plan aimed at acquiring truth. "A belief has warrant for person S only if that belief is produced in S by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for S's kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth. We must add…that when a belief meets these conditions and does enjoy warrant, the degree of warrant depends on the strength of the belief, the firmness with which S holds it."[23] Thus, a person whose cognitive faculties have malfunctioned cannot claim to have warrant.

Moments and degrees of cognitive dysfunction are not enough to overturn Plantinga's theory. Humans (rightly) assume that their minds work in most if not all circumstances. An airplane is designed to function in a particular way. The presence of a few airplane crashes, for example, does not undermine the intent or design function of the actual plane. "The idea of proper functioning is no more problematic than, say, that of a Boeing 747's working properly. Something we have constructed—a heating system, a rope, a linear accelerator—is functioning properly when it is functioning in the way in which it was designed to

[23] Quoted in *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), 156.

function."[24] Hallucinations do not undermine the general design function of the mind. If they occurred on a regular basis, then either such manifestations would be part of the mind's function (of which we'd have to cope with), or we wouldn't recognize them as a problem. Saying, for instance, that often times a person's liver fails does not discredit the knowledge of what the liver does on a regular basis. In fact, unveiling moments of failure in any organism presupposes design. Exceptions rarely disprove the rule.

So what does this iconoclastic theory of knowledge have to do with religion? Plantinga demonstrates that belief in God—and specifically the Christian God—fits (i.e., doesn't violate) the criteria for warrant. God, like Professor *S*, reveals himself to me. The idea that God loves me and saves doesn't depend on my ability to prove his existence, nor does it require universal acceptance for it to be warranted. Furthermore, in *Warranted Christian Belief,* Plantinga wraps up the concept of warrant and proper function, criticizes materialists, and offers an alternative model derived from the writings of Aquinas and Calvin, the so-called A/C model. Accordingly, the *sensus divinitatus* (the sense of the divine), whereby beliefs concerning God are occasioned in the human mind, reflects the way in which the mind was created to function—namely, to produce beliefs about the true God. God has implanted in the mind of all human beings a sense of the divine. This "sense" is aroused and occasioned in the proper circumstances; at other times it is, as Calvin writes, citing Romans 1, suppressed. However, the suppression of the divine sense is, again, not enough to collapse warrant and proper function or the accompanying model.[25]

Most thinkers confuse belief in God with God's existence—the former an epistemological position, the latter an ontological question. There is a world of difference between the two. When I tell someone that I believe in God, a belief deeply situated in my mind, the common response is a demand to prove the existence of the divine. Using Plantinga's system, I could appropriately answer, "I don't have to." All I've said is that I *believe* in God. Instead, the modernist must show how belief in the divine is unwarranted—viz., how my mind is suffering dysfunction, that my cognitive environment is skewed, or that my belief is not along a design plan aimed at truth. The mode of knowing God is the same as knowing other people. As I mentioned above, belief in an existing being, like Professor *S*, does not require a proof or exhaustive delineation of her person. Nonetheless, the warranted belief entails the existence of Professor *S*. In a similar way, theistic proofs are not required for belief in God. If my belief in God is warranted—and one would have to engage in the insurmountable task of showing that it is not—then the belief itself, via common sense, entails the existence of God.[26]

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[24] Alvin Plantinga, "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function," *Philosophical Perspective* vol. 2 (1988): 1-50. This essay was the precursor to Plantinga's *Warrant and Proper Function.* You will notice by the title of the essay that Plantinga prefers "warrant" to "positive epistemic status," but the two mean the same thing.

[25] In contradistinction to Van Tillian presuppositionalists, the suppression of the knowledge of God is first an ethical problem—not an epistemological (i.e., cognitively functional) one.

[26] I'm not arguing that knowing God means that I know his every predicate. I know God in as much as he has revealed himself to me. The same is true for our daily human interaction. I know someone solely on the basis of what that person reveals about herself. I know my wife, but I don't know her *in-herself.*

The notion that one can obtain warrant without argument or reason has caused significant recoil among today's scholars. If belief in God requires no argument, evidence, or justification (in the deontological or positivistic sense), then can we believe in just anything? For Plantinga, why would someone even raise such an objection? Consider, once again, the belief in the appearance of Professor *S*. Does my "Professor *S*" belief, which is not based on outside evidence but the experience itself, mean that I can believe in just anybody? Of course not, and no one would respond in that way.

A second objection relates to other non-Christian beliefs. Is it possible for a Jew or a Muslim to employ the same epistemology to account for their belief in God, which is qualitatively distinct from the Christian's God?[27] Again, refer to the response in the preceding paragraph: why would an appeal to another religion necessarily collapse the argument Plantinga is making concerning Christian beliefs? The position of the Jew or the Muslim has no logical bearing on the warranted nature of the Christian's belief. Should a Christian reject his or her belief simply because of the objections raised by secularists, atheists, or competing religions? No. It is important to keep in mind that Plantinga is simply arguing that Christian belief satisfies the criteria for warrant in the same way that belief in other human minds is warranted. Furthermore, because it accords with the standards of proper thinking, the A/C Christian model is more cogent than any other cognitive model.

Conclusion

Everyone agrees that a building with a dilapidated foundation is untenable. Demolition, the material equivalent of literary "deconstruction," precedes rebuilding. Connolly, Chakrabarty, and Plantinga have uncovered the rot at the base of the Enlightenment project. Although iconoclastic, none of the authors are anarchistic. A few things can be drawn from their disparate studies of religion. First, they show the conceptual myopia and contradictions of modern scholarship and its utter failure to incorporate religion in the evolution of intellectual professionalism. Second, they propose that taking seriously the place of religion and religious groups offer a richer picture of how we can understand the world. Third, religion is essential to academia's rebirth. Its presence is necessary for a healthy social, intellectual, and cultural ethos, allowing us to understand the relationship between divine and human agency. Finally, what they have offered encourages those, like the present writer, already committed to participation in a religious community.

Who will deny that an important characteristic of postmodernism is its indefatigable assault on the contradictions inherent in modernism? A window of opportunity has opened up—namely, the prospect of a re-evaluation of religion as a necessary component of human life and thought. What have we learned? Let those who are members of religious communities become guarded postmodernists, for this is the time for a healthy dose of radical revision.

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[27] Competing religious claims should not be dismissed. Indeed, I would argue that one would have to employ a different strategy to deal with comparative religious claims or constructions. It's a much more complicated enterprise. I have deliberately left atheists from the list of objectors. It is much more difficult to prove a universal negative—namely, that God *does not* exist. Not even the so-called argument from evil can cogently dismantle certain theistic arguments. Which statement, for instance, has more weight: "It is possible that God exists"; "It is impossible for God to exist." The latter has little merit, if any.

THE BODY AND HUMAN IDENTITY IN POSTMODERNISM AND ORTHODOXY[1]

Scott Prather[2]

In *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Terry Eagleton notes the centrality of the body for the identity of the "postmodern subject."[3] It may be somewhat of a misstatement to accuse Christianity, as Eagleton accuses postmodernism, with bodily *preoccupation*—theology is decidedly not reducible to somatics—yet from creation to resurrection, the dying of the old Adam and the rising of the new, the human body is affirmed and given a central place in the biblical narrative. This essay explores the body as a locus of self-identity in post- or late-modern thought, as well as the materiality of true (i.e., "spiritual") human identity according to an Orthodox anthropology and account of eucharistic participation in Christ's Body. The "nature" of the human being will be described with primary reference to Eastern Orthodox texts, though the resulting theological vision is amenable to both Eastern and Western theological reflection. Implicit in this discussion is the role of the *ethical*, as made explicit in the theme of the body as a site for both the givenness and production or formation of human identity.

The Postmodern Loss of Subjectivity

The body is and will remain central to theological or philosophical discussions of self-identity insofar as no one is giving up on the claim that bodies are what we have. But as Eagleton makes clear, this *having* bodies is precisely what is now at issue in postmodern thought.[4] In reaction to the natural, biological, and abstract "isms" of modernity that imply the existence of a stable human subject irreducible to the body, the so-called "new somatics" sets forth a kind of immanent culturalism that is just as reductive of self-identity as the modern "isms" it rejects. In so doing, it "risks dispelling subjectivity itself."[5] For what is being abandoned (qua *post*) is the *(self)transcendence* of the modern subject, the latter coming too close to having an intrinsic and inevitably immaterial "nature" to stand up against the new cultural determinism. Eagleton thus narrates the shift from the body as the locus of the phenomenological subject to the body as the total determination of the subject, resulting in the increasing loss of a discernable subjectivity as the body becomes a mere

[1] I would to thank my colleague, Ken Oakes, for reading and providing helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

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[3] Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 69.

[4] I am not unaware of the difficulties of the term "postmodern." Does the *post* refer to a historical period or intellectual shift, a cultural or conceptual abandonment? I take Eagleton's defense of the more generic "postmodernism"—its denoting a kind of working one's way through the (philosophical and cultural) tenets of modernism "to a position still deeply marked by it"—as my own point of departure. Thus when the term is used here it can be taken to refer to a certain trend of recent sensibilities, primarily philosophical but certainly at some point indicative of "the wider culture." Cf. Eagleton, *Illusions*, vii-x.

[5] Eagleton, *Illusions*, 70-75.

object. As meaning itself is materialized,[6] the body looks more and more like dead matter, made and remade, through what a devoted Heideggerian might call the "play of being"—forces and relations external to "us," and wholly constitutive of "our" identity.

Alain Badiou's *Ethics* further clarifies what to make of these philosophical trends by narrating, and in some sense displaying, the loss of human subjectivity. Badiou states that in the 1960s Michel Foucault frustrated modern intellectuals with his declaration that "Man, in the sense of constituent subject, was a constructed historical concept peculiar to a certain order of discourse," a concept damned to become irrelevant as soon as "the kind of discourse which alone had made it meaningful became historically obsolete."[7] In the wake of thinkers such as Foucault, the "idea of a natural or spiritual identity of Man," and the correlative conception of ethics as *rules* for "human beings in general," became contested.[8] Thus one of Badiou's overarching claims is that modern ethics requires the assumption of a general or "universally recognizable" human subject, the abstraction of which legitimates claims to certain "natural" rights.

What is of particular import here is the account of subjectivity Badiou proffers in light of "the death of Man."[9] The negation of a universal human subject carries some practical weight. It is not, after all, merely self-evident what constitutes the *unity* of "humanity as such," but rather reflective judgments about such things can be made only through the cultivation of a certain kind of vision, within this or that way of narrating the nature of things or the absence of such a nature.[10] Badiou's own reading occurs within the horizon of the loss of metaphysical horizons, leading him to ground thought and action in an immanentist ontology rather than a transcendent subject, be it human or divine.

A *kind* of transcendence still creates Badiou's "subject," who in its emergence "goes beyond the animal," but "the animal remains its sole foundation."[11] "There is only a particular kind of animal" who is called upon by an "event"—an *excessive* historical happening which is irreducible to ordinary situations and "descriptions of 'what there is'"—to "*invent* a new way of being" in one's given historical situation according to "the event."[12] This being-in-fidelity to the event is the mark of subjectivity, yet it is enabled by the interplay of wholly immanent forces: the actualized animality of "what we are" and the potent, excessive character of "what we *may become*" through living into ("realizing") the truthfulness of an external historical event. Thus, the loss of human subjectivity is here replaced with a subject who is "absolutely nonexistent in the situation 'before' the event"—

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[6] Eagleton notes that the fashionable word "material" has been "stretched beyond all feasible sense. For if even meaning is material, then there is nothing which is not, and the term simply cancels all the way through" (*Illusions*, 75).

[7] Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Human Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York: Verso, 2001), 5. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), especially the daunting conclusion on pp. 386-87.

[8] Badiou, *Ethics*, 4-10.

[9] Badiou, Ethics, 5-7.

[10] Thus part of the rhetorical force of *Ethics* is in Badiou's displaying the indebtedness of human rights logic to a kind of Kantian vision. Cf. *Ethics*, pp. 2, 8-9, 135.

[11] Badiou, *Ethics*, 41.

[12] Badiou, *Ethics*, 40-43.

there are no loving, artistic, or political "subjects" —only *subjects of* amorous, artistic or revolutionary *events*. Badiou therefore displays what Eagleton describes: the loss of any psychological, reflexive, or transcendental subjectivity that might "fall within the province of human nature," here replaced by a subject who "has no 'natural' pre-existence" apart from biological determinism being broken down by the excessive power of an historical event.[13]

On Eagleton's terms, one can see how Badiou's account of subjectivity is caught up in the shift "from the body as subject to the body as object,"[14] since, for Badiou, there is no subject until "the event" *happens to* the (erstwhile biologically determined) human animal. Eagleton's alternative to biological determinism and the historico-cultural creation of the subject is to retain the nature-culture tension by pointing out their dialectical interrelations. Despite the postmodernist trend of pitting nature against culture and then opting for the latter, "we are not 'cultural' rather than 'natural' creatures, but cultural by virtue of our nature…by virtue of the kinds of bodies we have and the kind of world to which they belong."[15] And the kind of bodies we call human, Eagleton contends, are precisely those whose flourishing requires self-transcendence through the development of linguistic capacities.

With Merleau-Ponty, Eagleton sees the body as a "self-transformative practice" wherein "soul-talk" is a way of naming the mysterious uniqueness of the human body and its capacities as a creative center from which persons can "work in complex ways upon the world and so necessarily enter into linguistic communion with their fellows." Language in Eagleton's view enables self-transcendence from biological constraints. It is the means by which one acquires a *history*, allowing us to "abstract ourselves from the world (which includes for this purpose our bodies) and so transform or destroy it." Hence, that persons *have* bodies, rather than being wholly reducible to their bodies, is correlative to that "other mark of our humanity," language, which enables creative action upon ourselves and the world.[16] Yet bodies are clearly material objects as well, and it is thus "phenomenologically just" to speak of human bodies both as objects *and* as subjects.

The kind of material "objects" human bodies are, then, enables the development of subjectivity through the limited-but-real transcendence of what biology determines. Eagleton's point seems to be that because language is a means of signification, it bestows *meaning*, and therefore meaningful relations with others. Subsequently the person is able to reflect and act creatively upon oneself and the world. For Eagleton, then, it is clear that linguistic abilities are closely related to "the soul" which is really just a hyperbolic way of speaking of the human body's uniqueness as "a self-transformative practice" and center of creative action upon material objects.[17] Humans are thus "cusped between nature and

[13] Badiou, *Ethics*, 43.

[14] Eagleton, *Illusions*, 71.

[15] For the following, see Eagleton, *Illusions*, 71-4.

[16] Thus Eagleton claims: "If soul body is to be replaced by body discourse, then one can see the point of dropping talk of *having* a body and substituting talk of *being* one" (*Illusions*, 74).

[17] To illustrate: "If we had a language which adequately captured this bodily creativity we would have perhaps never needed soul talk in the first place…. If the human body is a self-transformative practice, then it is not identical with itself in the manner of corpses and carpets, and this is a claim that soul language was also trying to make" (*Illusions*, 72).

culture," with the external factor of language introducing, as it is "internalized," the social dimension of meaning, thereby enabling a subjectivity that is both self-determining ("free") and non-self-identical ("socially constituted").[18]

All of this raises serious social implications for the loss of subjectivity in postmodernist thought. If we do not *have* but *are* our bodies then it becomes easier to claim that there is no source of resistance to whatever seems to be our "natural" desires (other than that granted by a political or ideological sovereign). If, as Eagleton says, any degree of "self-determination" is summarily ruled out, then subjectivity "falls back on the modern negative notion of liberty as doing your own thing free of constraint."[19] Furthermore, desire itself is no longer constitutive of personal identity in accounts where subjectivity is wholly determined by culture, clearing the way for the loss of any sense of responsibility for one's own desires, actions, or subjectivity at all. An unchecked notion of radically "autonomous" selfhood ("I *have* my body") engenders a false notion of self-determination that ignores the ways in which the self's identity and desires are shaped by social relations and forces, from the linguistic to the economic. Yet, with a view in which the body *is* the subject, and the latter is an identity as fluid as cultural change, social "formation" becomes social "determination." It then becomes not only difficult to see why one should even care how they live (since one's desires and perception of the world have been determined by a rapacious economic system or abusive patterns of family relations), but raises the thorny moral question: *what's the alternative?* Psychotherapists may help us "cope," but if at the end of the day our fate lies in the hands of the market or some other all-determinative power, why resist? If bodies are what we are, and they themselves are exhaustively determined by culture, it is hard to see how there can be a subjectivity that transcends the enclosed cycle of external ideological forces that discipline our bodies and so determine human identity.

In this light, Eagleton's criticism of "the new somatics" is a healthy corrective to both modern biological- and late-modern cultural "isms," and to the nonsensicality of attempting to speak of distinctly "human" subjects when the self is merely a material body with no given nature, or a body whose nature is wholly determined by culture. He has even provided a positive account of the significance of "soul-talk" that is not reductively Cartesian (or is at least anti-dualist). Yet the relation of the soul and language, to which Eagleton attributes the creation of subjectivity, is not clearly described as Eagleton's depiction of the soul remains a rather mysterious means of speaking of the *body's* creativity. Further, the "question of origins" (those of humankind or language) is, in post-metaphysical fashion, simply left unaddressed.

A theological account of the body and human identity necessitates a different view of human nature which, while in important respects amenable to the claim that humans are unique by virtue of "the kinds of bodies they have," does not speak merely of the creative power of the body or human language itself, but of all existence (including the human body) as the good gift of a freely acting God who allows for the free existence of that which God is

[18] On these grounds Eagleton offers an illuminative comparison of the self in modern liberal humanism (as found, e.g., in the vision of John Locke) and postmodern thought, opting instead for a socialist-democratic account of the (political) subject. Cf. especially Eagleton, *Illusions*, 88-92.

[19] Eagleton, *Illusions*, 87.

not. Orthodox anthropology provides one such alternative account of human nature, as it hinges on a theological account of reality in which the human body (indeed, material creation as a whole) is in fact *good* precisely because the "determination" of its nature by a sovereign God does not require its ultimate negation.

An Orthodox Anthropological Approach

For at least two reasons, Orthodox anthropology may bear resources for an especially timely corrective to postmodern accounts of the body and its loss of human subjectivity. First, Orthodox conceptions of the human, though not wholly untouched by Western developments, retain a kind of historical unity that is often lost in much of Western theological anthropology, in part because of its grounding in an authorized tradition of theologoumena (i.e., patristic sources). Second, and perhaps more importantly, Orthodox anthropology maintains a balance between an affirmation of materiality, including the bodily nature of human identity, and a specific view of transcendence which grounds the human being and constitutes the "mysterious" or immaterial element of personhood.[20] The method adopted here is thus to sketch a theological account of the body and human identity with special reference to Orthodox sources, and to conclude by highlighting a few ways in which eucharistic communion distinguishes a Christian anthropology from the account of the postmodern subject sketched above.

As Panayiotis Nellas's *Deification in Christ*[21] makes clear, Orthodox teaching on the nature of human being(s) is inseparable from a theology of the image of God and being-*in*-the-image of God. The philosophical rejection of *any* horizon beyond the material will not do for theological anthropology (even though it constitutes, so far as it is *Christian* theology, a peculiar mode of "metaphysics"), for as creatures, human beings stand with all creation on this side of the gulf that separates the Creator from everything else that exists and is not God. Moreover, as *human* persons, they occupy this position as beings constituted by an essential orientation towards communion with God. This orientation is correlative to humanity's being created in the image of God—that is, *in the image of Christ*, who is himself the perfect image of the Father. As Nellas says, "Man, having been created 'in the image' of the infinite God, is called by his own nature…to transcend the limited boundaries of creation and to become infinite."[22] Thus, for the Fathers, the uniqueness of the human is not found in its being a type of animal with the highest capacity for development of its biological faculties, "but in his being a 'deified animal,'"—that kind of being whose "destiny" is everlasting communion with the uncreated God.[23]

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[20] The latter point is, of course, made in all serious Christian theology, from East to West, though the fragmentation of Western Christianity (from which the East is not on all accounts free) forces one to turn to either Roman Catholicism or to inhabit a specific tradition of the Reformation to articulate a coherent theological anthropology. The argument here is not that Orthodox anthropology provides *the* properly Christian solution to the postmodern loss of subjectivity, it is simply an investigation of how it might resource one theologically coherent response.

[21] Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

[22] Cf. Nellas, *Deification*, 28-31.

[23] Nellas, *Deification*, 30. This is not to say that the rest of creation, animal and otherwise, has a

This destiny, however, does not entail the ultimate negation of materiality—human nature is and will remain embodied, as the Christian rejection of monophysitism and Gnosticism[24], and the creedal affirmation of bodily resurrection make clear. To be human is to be made "in the image of God," a body made from "the dust of the earth" enlivened by and united with God through the soul. In this tradition, the soul is itself not a disembodied "part" of the human being, but embodied aspects of the person which reflect and tend towards the image of God (the *logos* of the Father) including intellect, will, and desire.[25] Biological and cultural reductionism is therefore eliminated. The "structure" of the human being is *theo*-logical: "his ontology is iconic," because the human is a soul-body unity in which *both* are made and equipped for fellowship with the divine.[26] Bodily existence is then constitutive of human nature, but not utterly reducible to it. The human person is the "kind of animal" which tends by its own nature toward the realization and transformation of itself, through communion with the One who is fully divine and fully human.

Yet the Orthodox account of human nature, like all biblical anthropology, is complicated by the Scriptural narration of a fall into sin that makes the condition of historical humankind "unnatural." The nature of the human as we know and see it is "not the original, and therefore true, human nature."[27] Persons exist now in "garments of skin"—the biblical image adopted by the Fathers for describing postlapsarian human existence, which is perhaps best summarized as *mortal* existence, a "life in death" in which both body and soul are disordered by the "irrational" nature that characterizes sinful humanity. God is "self-subsistent life," hence, whereas human nature without sin was characterized by immortality through true *spiritual* union with God, in sin it is marked by the *fleshliness* of the body's decay and the soul's irrationality, the passion of being-in-flux. Nellas does associate the garments with materiality,[28] but it is not materiality as such which the Fathers identify with sin. It is the materiality *we* know, this-worldliness gone awry, that marks human existence as a being-in-death. The soul's rational union with God turns into the irrationality of disordered faculties, and the body is corruptible through the loss of its organic union with all material creation by virtue of its "transparent simplicity."[29] It takes on the contradictory character of

destiny other than communion with God, though I think there are strands of Orthodox teaching which, in its particular elevation of human nature, could be legitimately taken that way. Yet as mentioned below, the Orthodox vision is one of *all* creation existing in potential unity with the human body, its destiny being the unification of the sensible and spiritual through transformation in Christ (cf. Nellas, 54-7, 230-31).

[24] Cf. Nellas, *Deification*, 39-40, 45-6.

[25] Nellas, *Deification*, 34-5.

[26] Thus St. Nicolas Kavasilas: "Man hastens towards Christ not only on account of [Christ's] divinity, which is the goal of all things, but also because of His human nature" (224). See also *Deification*, 29-30, 33-4.

[27] "That which empirical observation calls 'human nature' is in biblical and patristic teaching a later nature, a state which came about after the fall…. Consequently, if modern man wishes to understand fully the nature of his existence…he needs to broaden his horizon, to ask himself whether what he considers 'natural' is in reality so very self-evident" (45).

[28] "The life with which the garments of skin clothe man is dead or biological or non-rational because in the last analysis it is material" (49).

[29] The disarray of body and soul is described by Nellas, with the help of St. Maximus the Confessor, as the soul being "taken captive by sensible things," so that the senses themselves and

a corporeal unity "pull[ed] in different directions,"[30] tending towards nonexistence instead of life. Hence both pre- and postlapsarian human nature is embodied; the key difference is that the prelapsarian human, though created with room for growth, was in its union with the divine nature a *different kind* of *being*—the soul existing in pure contemplation of the One who is Truth, the body in complete union with all creation *because* of its union with the One who truly is. Together, both comprise the natural union of the human person.[31]

Orthodox anthropology, then, claims that the human being is by nature a soul-body unity, and that the whole person is meant to be incorruptible by virtue of its union with the divine *essentia*. Even in sin, humans retain their most distinctive characteristic as being created in the image of God, and they—with all creation—still exist by God's grace. Yet human beings no longer tend *by their own nature* toward the fuller actualization of life through communion with God, but have life tending towards death and nonexistence.[32] In other words, the ontic core of humanity is still rooted in the being of the grace of God, but to achieve that communion with the divine which comprises genuine personhood now requires the transcending of (sinful) human nature. The entire human person, faculties of the soul and bodily senses, achieves restoration by participation in a body truly human and divine, the Body of Christ.

So where does this leave our account of the body and human identity? It has been made clear that for Orthodox thought the body is constitutive of human identity. It is an indispensable locus of personal identity, though personhood is not reducible to biological existence. As Epiphanios of Salamis says, "the natural man is correctly said to be neither soul without body nor conversely body without soul, but the single form of beauty constituted from the combination of soul and body."[33] However, the *kind* of bodies human beings now possess—dense corpses "scourged" with corruption and decay[34]—is not reflective of intended human nature or the being "which is to come," that new humanity realized in Christ, the new Adam. Being in the image of God, as Nellas says, is therefore both gift and goal: "it really does constitute man's *being*, but only in potentiality."[35] It is only in Christ, "not simply the Logos but the incarnate Logos," that one finds the source and *telos* of humanity. It is only through him that the whole human being achieves its "natural" (re)union with God.[36]

"within them the corresponding faculties of the soul, "put on the form of sensible things and submit to them." Thus the disordering of body and soul constitutes the "non-rational" form of sinful human nature (58-9).

[30] Nellas, *Deification*, 58-9.

[31] Nellas, *Deification*, 52-3, 56-8.

[32] "Man no longer has life…as a characteristic proper to his being. There is now no grace welling up naturally within him. Life continues only so long as death is postponed. That which exists now in the proper sense is death: "life has been transmuted into survival" (Nellas, *Deification*, 47,).

[33] Cited in Nellas, *Deification*, 46.

[34] Nellas, *Deification*, 52-3.

[35] Nellas, *Deification*, 36.

[36] Nellas puts it thus: "The 'in the image' is a real power, a pledge which should lead to …hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. Only then does the iconic or potential being of man become real *authentic* being. Man finds in the Archetype"—the *incarnate* Word of God—"his

Union with Christ, in whom the divine and human natures hypostatically unite, is therefore requisite for the human being's gaining "real 'subsistence'" through being-in-communion with the Triune God.[37] Because of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of God's *logos*, the means provided for such communion is participation in Christ's Body on earth. Hence it is inconceivable, given Orthodox anthropology and its articulation of the means of reunion with God, that salvation could entail the obliteration of the human body or materiality as such. Rather, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, "He partakes of my flesh in order that He may both save the image and immortalize the flesh."[38] The *telos* of humankind is therefore "life without defilement, when [the] body has been purified of corruption and [the] will delivered from all sin."[39] Such life is realized only through being given a share in the life of God which, for Orthodox and certain strands of Western thought, is achieved especially through union with Christ in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist As Embodied Communion of Persons

John Zizioulas' *Being in Communion*[40] is an important contemporary statement of the grounding of ontology and anthropology in Trinitarian theology. Zizioulas shows that, already in Athanasius, the Greek concept of *ousia* was coming to be redefined as being-in-relation, as "communion."[41] Conceiving of being-as-communion was part of the patristic process of thinking through the fundamental Christian claim that Christ the incarnate *logos* was the truth of God. It is not simply that Christ revealed God, but rather, if indeed Christ *is* the revelation of God, that his very person must be identified with Truth, with the life of God which is alone true life. Truth had to be thought with being (existence) which had to be thought with life.[42]

Zizioulas notes that, for Irenaeus and Ignatius, the identification of Christ with truth and life stemmed from their experience of the Church as a eucharistic community.[43] They saw the Eucharist as communion with the *body* of Christ and thus with God—communion which imparted life precisely because of the unique identification of this man Jesus with the God who *is* Being, Truth, and Life.[44] In this regard, it is fitting that the Eucharist is often described as the taking or receiving of communion; but what is most important for our present purposes is that, on the human side of things, this is a communion of persons precisely because it is a communion of bodies. The Eucharist is in this conception a "place" where God's eternality erupts into space and time as the communion of love, which is God's

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true ontological meaning." (35-7).

[37] Nellas, *Deification*, 37-8.

[38] Nellas, *Deification*, 205.

[39] Nellas, *Deification*, 224. These are the words of St. Nikolas Kavasilas, reprinted from his *Life in Christ*.

[40] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985).

[41] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 84-6.

[42] Cf. Zizioulas, *Being*, 78-80.

[43] Zizioulas, *Being*, 78-82.

[44] "The life of the eucharist is the life of God Himself…. It is the life of communion with God, such as exists within the Trinity and is actualized within the members of the eucharistic community" (Zizioulas, *Being*, 81).

triune life, is extended to human persons through the person of Christ and the power of God's Spirit. This meeting of the divine and human is *embodied*; it occurs as human persons (body and soul) are identified with the body of Him, in whose person divinity and humanity are one.

Reflecting back on Eagleton, Christians may affirm with him that authentic human subjectivity is both self-determining ("free") and non-self-identical ("socially constituted").[45] But they will not merely rely on an account of human language as that which enables whatever degree of "self-determination" or freedom humans posses. Linguistic relationality can certainly be celebrated as a means of communion with each other and with God, but it is finally God's own being and action which determines humanity's ontological origin (*archi*) and consummation (*telos*). Christian anthropology and theologies of the body must therefore affirm a fundamental nature of human beings that is determined by God, but it is precisely because of *who God is* and *how* God determines human *being* that the Christian account is a positive alternative to reductive modern and postmodern accounts.

In *The Life in Christ*, St. Nikolas Kavasilas provides a poignant interpretation of the "new humanity" offered in Christ by reversing, according to Trinitarian logic, the biblical typology of the old and new Adam. [46] The relevant theme of St. Kavasilas' essay is that human beings in the beginning were created *for* the new humanity realized in Christ. Human nature is determined by God as that which tends toward "a life without defilement, [the] body purified of all corruption and [the] will delivered from all sin." [47] This validates what was said earlier about the fundamental goodness of the body and its constitutive role in human identity, because it shows that, at root, the *whole* human person is meant for communion with the eternal God: "Man hastens towards Christ by his nature…not only because of His divinity, which is the goal of all things, but because of His other, human nature as well."[48]

Therefore, God's determination of the nature of human beings—and thus a properly Christian anthropology—is not one that requires the ultimate subjugation or negation of the body or the self's identity, for "our nature from the beginning had immortality as its aim."[49] Rather, the Christian claim is that the God who is himself being, life, and goodness, has (though importantly not out of any intrinsic necessity)[50] created us for free communion with himself and consequently with all creation. Of course, as was noted before concerning Orthodox anthropology, sin must be accounted for. That the life in communion for which humans are made is "only achieved later in the Body of the Savior,"[51] means that

[45] Eagleton, *Illusions*, 88-92.

[46] Reprinted in Nellas, *Deification*, 224.

[47] Nellas, *Deification*, 224.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] To make the existence of created being a "necessity" of God's Being would ultimately lead to a monist ontology in which God was either the top link of a this-worldly "chain of being" or a kind of divine addition to the human-historical process. But in either case God would only transcend humanity by finally negating or subsuming what it is, and thus true freedom is denied. See in this respect Rowan Williams' criticisms of Hegel in his *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 160-61.

[51] Nellas, *Deification*, 224.

communion with God is possible only through communion with the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. This communion occurs in the eucharistic communion that, for Orthodox and most mainline Western theology, is constitutive of the church as Christ's body. "The life of the eucharist is the life of God himself," but participation in the Eucharist, and thereby the "enhypostization" of human personhood, is a *gift* precisely because it is communion with this life, "such as exists within the Trinity and is actualized within the members of the eucharistic community."[52]

Conclusion

If God is being itself (and as such truth, life, goodness, and peace),[53] then manifestly human existence—that of persons whose end is to "live theocentrically…in the image of God"[54]—is realized only in communion with Him. But God is not a "being" like human beings. God's sovereign freedom is not such that He determines creaturely identity in the manner of an autonomous subject's willing. The doctrine of the Trinity clarifies that God is in Himself an economy of love in which He freely gives of Himself to allow for the "simultaneous" existence of both irreducible *difference* (the Father *is not* the Son, the Father and Son *are not* the Spirit) and authentic communion. It is because this God has created human creatures for the new humanity of Jesus Christ, who is the "image" in which we are made and for which we are destined, that communion with his body can be the condition of true subjectivity, without the negation of our own embodied identity as unique human creatures.

This vision also implies a specific kind of sociality and thus a moral alternative to the implications of the postmodern account outlined above. For coming to be-in-communion with each other on the basis of communion with God (albeit proleptically, as we receive the eschatological promise of faith), is the gift of the One who exists *as* an economy of mutually self-giving love. Christ himself is the basis of true communion and as such of a fully *human* existence. The church, as the body of Christ in and for the world, can in this regard supply an alternative to the material and social productions of the self which imply cultural and biological determinism. But it will only do so insofar as it is in proclamation and life a sign and witness of the new humanity that enables the transcendence of sinful patterns of social existence.[55] Jesus is, to borrow Herbert McCabe's description, the "[self-]communication of the Father," through whom God "offers a new way in which [humans] can be together, a new way in which they can be free to be themselves."[56] The church will be a sign of God's salvation and peace in and for the world when it responds in faith to God's call to communion with Himself and one another—when Christians are willing to risk in that same

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[52] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 81.

[53] For the compatibility of such descriptions of who God is in God's self, see David Bentley Hart's "The Offering of Names: Metaphysics, Nihilism, and Analogy," in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, eds. Reinhard Hütter and Paul J. Griffiths (T. & T. Clark, 2005), pp. 55-76.

[54] *Deification in Christ*, 42.

[55] In this respect see William Cavanaugh's account of the Eucharist as a "discipline of the body" that spiritually transforms human existence. *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

[56] Herbert McCabe, O. P., *Law, Love and Language*, rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 126-29. Of course to articulate and affirm this "freedom" implies the need for ongoing theological reflection on who humans "themselves" truly are.

faith a manner of human relations that reflect God's gracious embrace of the entire created order and in that embrace overturns the malformations of our body and identity in sin.

TEACHING NEW DOGS OLD TRICKS: RECONSIDERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Paul D. Jacobs[1]

At the dawning of the 21st century, it is timely to take a reading of the current climate of theological education, both in methodology and content, and the manner in which it has changed over the years. Theological education has undergone several paradigm shifts since the 1940s, the dross of which has not always been beneficial. I begin by briefly tracking two periods of 20th century American history, categorized according to its major wars (i.e., the post-World War II and Vietnam War eras) and conclude with a third—the Gulf War era which started in 1991 and continues to this day. While I am not proffering a *direct* causal link between these conflicts and the various currents of thought in America, I merely use these periods as convenient "snapshots" of the state of theological education at key junctures. Writing as an Baptist and Evangelical, I have particularly in view the theological education offered in Evangelical seminaries and Bible schools, though I do not necessarily limit myself to these.

The old saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" seems to hold about as much water as Soviet economic theory now does. Time and tide have demonstrated the utter falsehood of this otherwise storied proverb. Many in the older generation are warming up to technology to learn a new hobby, to keep up with children and grandchildren, or simply for personal enrichment and fun. Many are even sending out photographs over the net. There are chat rooms just for seniors where you'll find monikers like "Cyber Granny" and "Super Senior." Teaching an old dog new tricks is actually a very normal part of life, especially if the "dog" has a heart for learning and growing.

While it is axiomatic that old dogs can learn new tricks, however, the reverse is not always quite so evident. Is it possible to teach new dogs, in this case, Generations X, Y, and Z—people who have matured in a "postmodern" society—the old tricks of theological education (esp. theology and biblical studies)? This is not to say that a "Gen–Xer" is incapable of reading, understanding, and answering questions concerning theology. Rather, I wish to probe a bit whether a person growing up in a postmodern society can be effectively trained and equipped for ministry using the old "tried and true" methods. In order to address this, it is necessary to briefly discuss theological education of the two previous generations and compare not only content and methodology, but the students themselves. This comparison with two former eras of American theological education may help to shed light on the current crop of Gen-Xers (those born from around 1964-1980 and Generation Yers (those born from around 1980-1994) now populating Evangelical Bible colleges and seminaries.

The World War II and Korean War Era

This generation has been labeled by Tom Brokaw, "The Greatest Generation." Whether this designation is accurate or not, certainly this was a generation tried and tested during times we now know as the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, and the Battle of the Bulge. It

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was a time when significant portions of the world sought the annihilation of America and her way of life. These were common men and women, living in uncertain times, banding together to triumph over adversity.

In terms of education, few went beyond high school education, though, the clergy often had not only a college degree, but an advanced degree from a theological seminary. Indeed, this may have been the first generation of clergy as a whole to embrace seminary training. After the Second World War, enrollment in Bible colleges and seminaries increased at a faster rate than any time in history. Government programs, such as the G. I. Bill, made it possible for an entire new generation of clergy to take advantage of significant theological hubs in Dallas, Fort Worth, Boston, and Chicago. These men and women were often from the country and returned to those same rural settings to minister on completion of their theological training. Still, there were others who continued their theological training earning advanced degrees such as the ThM and ThD.

Some other words that are often used to characterize this generation of ministers are hard work, dedication, fidelity, compassion, and family. Many of them ministered for decades at the same church and, even after retirement, stayed in the same community. They loved their congregates and looked on their ministry as a *calling* from God, rather than as a *career*. This generation of clergy were often referred to affectionately by their parishioners with terms such as "parson" or "preacher." They taught and ministered to their people just as they had been taught by their seminary professors who predated the Great War. Their congregates were like-minded—valuing hard work, frugality, commitment, and fidelity. Divorce was not only uncommon for this generation, it was almost non-existent.

This is not, of course, to romanticize this generation of clergy into a state of saintly perfection. There were also those who believed in segregation and served in churches that advocated the separation of the races. When America became more of an integrated society, many of them did not adjust well. Of those who advocated integration, some found themselves summarily dismissed by their churches.

Vietnam War Era

The so-called Baby Boomer generation, those coming of age during the Vietnam conflict, brought about significant change in higher education. These were the students reared by those who had once advocated a stricter traditionalism. Their parents seldom divorced or rebelled (at least in any truly *public* way). For their children, however, this was not the case. The Baby Boomer generation (those born from around 1946-1964) embraced a different set of values than their parents. For many of them, the seemingly blind patriotism of their parents was replaced with skepticism and, at times, outright contempt for authority. War protests, campus sit-ins, and an invitation from Timothy Leary to "Turn on, tune in, and drop out" was the rallying cry for many of this generation.

Those who attended seminary brought some of this culture with them into the hallowed halls of theological education. Men's hair was noticeably longer and women's skirts were noticeably higher. No doubt, there were "old–school" faculty who bristled at this new wave of students and their strange ways. Many thought that the changes they saw were only on the surface. These sociological changes were, however, often profoundly deep. Indeed, a major

paradigm shift of values and ideals was taking place that was rather sudden and oftentimes tumultuous.

As the new generation came of age—often rejecting the values of the past—not only society, but the church was strongly impacted. With the so-called sexual revolution, chastity was often cast aside and more unwed mothers began to emerge in the church. As society cast off the permanency of relationships, marriages began to suffer and the divorce rate grew, both inside and outside the church.

The transitory and migratory nature of society also began to affect church life. In previous generations, people were typically baptized, married, and buried in the same church. Their lives often revolved around the social activities of the church. This also changed dramatically. People increasingly relocated due to a job change or marriage. This, in turn, resulted in fluctuations in church membership. Meanwhile, the tenure of a minister's service significantly dropped to an average of two years or less. No longer was the minister referred to as "parson" or "preacher," but "reverend."

The formal educational level of the population also began to increase. The numbers of students attending college was at an all-time high, while the number of people attending graduate school grew in similar proportions.

How did this change affect the next generation of clergy? In a word, *profoundly*. Seminaries grew in record numbers. This was due in part to the success of the "Jesus Movement" among the youth and a desire to either avoid the draft or delay military service during the Vietnam war. As Bible colleges and seminaries increased in enrollment, the degrees they offered began to mirror that of educated society at large. Many schools began to change the nomenclature of their degrees from MDiv to MA, the older Doctor of Theology (ThD) was replaced by the more common, and secular sounding, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The schools also began to offer hitherto unknown variations on their standard degrees—specialty degrees in such areas as Christian education, social work, and counseling.

Young seminarians took advantage of many of these new specialties in both the seminaries and in the churches, especially those in larger metropolitan areas. For the first time, churches were hiring ministers of "family life," "recreation," and "single adults," along with special age-oriented ministers. Such positions were added alongside the usual positions of minister of youth, minister of education, and associate pastor.

The increasing numbers of divorce also had an impact on how the ministry was conducted. Marriage-counseling courses became a standard part of the curriculum to better train pastors to deal with divorce and strained marriages. But there was also a problem with divorce among the clergy itself. Churches were, and to some degree still are, hesitant of hiring divorced ministers. However, this attitude is changing and the genesis of this change took place during this era.

The clergy of this time often began to look on itself as one among many other "professions." In the past, vocational ministry was looked on as a *calling*. During this period, while "calling" may have remained the preferred term, the concept of ministry as *career* began to emerge. The importance of having an effective resume, "networking," and "having the right connections" began to seep into the ministry just as it did for the world of

commerce. For some in the ministry, small- and medium-sized churches were increasingly seen as stepping-stones to larger responsibilities.

Nevertheless, there was one constant that continued to hold true. The teachers and professors who were training the newer batch of clergy were still decidedly "old school." They trained the younger clergy in the standard methodologies of lecture, memorization, research papers, theses, and dissertations. While the new group was more progressive in their thinking, their mentors, by and large, were still committed to the pedagogical and theological foundations of the "old way."

Gulf War Era

It is hard to imagine that our nation is once again engaged in another "Gulf War." It seems like the first war was only yesterday and has suddenly come upon us again. However, many of those currently enrolled in Bible colleges and seminaries were mere children back in 1991 during the first Gulf War. Children aged 8 to 12 back then, are in their 20s now.

This new, postmodern generation has grown up in an America profoundly different from previous generations. There have been major technological changes; the ubiquity of computer technology and the Internet has vastly, and forever, changed the very nature of research. Much fewer are the long hours in the theological library, looking for the right book or article. Now, literature reviews, databases, and search engines are a mere mouse click away. For many students today, doing a research paper is more of an exercise in "cut and paste" than actually checking out books from the library and reading them.

Even more significant than the major technological changes that make up this new paradigm shift, however, are the social and moral changes. The "Gen–X" or "Y" seminarian has grown up in a society very different from their parents. Students under 30 have never known a world in which abortion is not a legal right. They have never known a time when prayer in public schools was not merely legal, but commonplace. They have never known a time without cable TV and it's archetypes: MTV, ESPN, and CNN.

The sexual revolution has also changed how the issue of sexuality is addressed. Many in the World War II generation never experienced a pornographic movie. The Vietnam era group had to go to public theaters where adult films were shown to an entire audience. Now, such media can be purchased online or rented in a local video store and taken home for private viewing.

The Vietnam generation seldom knew what it was like to have divorced parents. The postmodern generation, however, is well acquainted. This generation has known war, but only from what they watch on CNN, not by what they have personally experienced. Protesting the country's military action is actually fashionable in some parts of the country, though not with the make-or-break (sometimes life-or-death) passion of the Vietnam era.

The postmodern generation has also received a different type of primary and secondary education than their parents. Whole language reading instruction, "Outcomes Based" education, and condom distribution have played a part in their curriculum. Yet, as reading and math scores have steadily declined over the last 25 years, divorce, teenage pregnancy, teenage drug usage, and abortion have steadily increased. The increasing acceptance of homosexuality as a normal way of life has so influenced the young today that one risks being

called old-fashioned, bigoted, or worse yet, intolerant should you go against the conventional, politically-correct wisdom of the day. The truths that were so absolute to their grandparents have become relativized and situational for the Gen-Xer and their younger siblings, the Gen-Yers. Their level of secular sophistication has broadened, but orthodox belief has been greatly diminished. Technology abounds, but wisdom is wanting. Spirituality in almost any form is encouraged by the mass media, but "Jesus" has become just another swear word on television and in movies. Prayer is a virtuous act, but only if it is not offered in the name of Jesus. Dan Rather praised the virtue of Saddam Hussein for taking a prayer break in an interview prior to the war in Iraq. One wonders if he would have praised George W. Bush for doing the same.

The church today is grappling with issues that detract from Her eternal purpose. Church controversies have more to do with style than theology. Some would say that it is hard for our churches to fight over theology when it is mostly absent. Worship wars and disputes over leadership styles distract the church from confronting the burning issues of life. Theology has been replaced with social behavior theories. The great hymns of the faith have often been replaced by mind-numbing ditties repeated over and over again until the congregation is singing in a semi-hypnotic trance. Worship sometimes has more to do with entertainment than with encountering a sovereign God. Discipleship has been replaced with self-help, and evangelism has been replaced with slick marketing strategies. Our desire to be "seeker-sensitive" have left us numb to the wooing of the Holy Spirit and the pursuit of personal holiness. The "saw-dust trail" and the "mourner's bench" are studied in courses in church history but rarely *experienced* by seminarians. Where we in the clergy were once called "parson," "pastor," "preacher," or "brother," we are now addressed as "doctor," thus further professionalizing our calling, and moving us one more step away from the average layperson.

From this culture emerges the contemporary seminarian and the future of the clergy. They come out of the "culture wars" of society bruised and battered. Many have past histories of drug and alcohol use. Many are caught in the trap of pornography addiction. They come from broken homes and blended families. Many find themselves divorced. Homosexuality is viewed as merely another lifestyle and any sort of putative homophobia (or almost any kind of "intolerance") is denounced as the worst kind of "sin." Those who hold to absolute truth and a God who knows everything are increasingly looked upon as theological Neanderthals. They arrive on the seminary campus seeking education and meaning more so than theological training.

As evangelical educators, one has a sacred duty to train the next generation of ministers and scholars. But, we often do so with very little knowledge of the cultural furnace in which this generation has been forged. These students know the lyrics to more Brittany Spears and Christina Aguilera songs than those of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Fannie Crosby, or John Newton.

It is an understatement that theological education has changed vastly. The number of part-time students is up dramatically from previous generations. Education is not the priority that it once was, merely one among many such as family, church, and work. Contemporary methods of instruction are not limited to books and lectures, but now include PowerPoint slides, video, and websites.

Then there are the dirty little secrets about which we are hesitant to mention, but must. Academic dishonesty, sloppy scholarship, political correctness, and grade inflation are some of the contaminants of a postmodern society that many who teach in evangelical institutions must address. God forbid that an educator should have someone actually fail a class because the student did not complete all of the assigned material! What would that do to the student's self esteem? What will that do to the faculty evaluation scores?

Those of us who teach often stand in front of a class that knows little of the theological rocks from which we were hewn. Yet, we must faithfully, and hopefully wisely and skillfully, fulfill this sacred trust. In years past, theology faculty had the luxury of having students who had grown up in Christian homes and were often second or third generation preachers. Such is not the case today. Many students have only been committed Christians for a few years and, in some cases, only a few months. Many are being saved from a completely secular lifestyle which, if not as a whole, at least in part was hostile to the Christian faith. Is it possible to take someone from the postmodern mindset and educate he or she in the theological truths that we hold dear and entrust them to take it to the church?

Let me close with an illustration. My sweet wife is not a citizen of this country. She was born and reared in the Philippines. She speaks the language, knows the customs, and is used to eating Filipino food. She thinks and acts like a Filipino because she is one. However, she has been around Americans most of her life. She even worked for the International Mission Board in the Philippines. She was converted under the ministry of an American missionary and has been married to an American for over 12 years. She speaks English. She now eats American food. She knows the customs and values of Americans. She has a child who is an American. She watches American TV, goes to American movies, and listens to American music. But, in her heart, she is still Filipino. In other words, you can take the Filipino out of the Philippines, but can you take the Philippines out of the Filipino?

Today many of the students in our theological institutions have matured in a postmodern society. Whether consciously or not, they speak the language of postmodernism. They know the values and customs of postmodernism. Their families have been affected by the ravages of secularism and humanism endemic to a postmodern society. They are, in their hearts, a product of a postmodern society.

When these students graduate from our institutions, hopefully, they will be able to articulate our evangelical theology. They will have taken Old and New Testament survey courses. They will know some Greek and Hebrew and perhaps some Aramaic. They will know some church history. Even so, while we may be able to take the postmodern citizen out of his or her culture for the time of their enrollment, can we take the postmodernism out of the citizen?

This burning question is, admittedly, one to which I have no "one-size-fits all" answer. I do, however, want to conclude with a conceptual challenge, albeit an onerous one: we must promote in this new generation not a theological *career*, but a *love of theology*. And, while doing so, we must do our best to meet their needs, but we must also not be purely *guided* by them. Precisely how to carry out these twin tasks is for another paper and will, no doubt, require fresh and creative thought among those of us who are entrusted with teaching these new dogs old tricks.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Metaphysics and the God of Israel: Systematic Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. By Neil B. MacDonald. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006; 248 pp., $24.99.**

The precise relation between nature and grace is one of the most complex, difficult and far-reaching questions of dogmatic theology. In his new book, *Metaphysics and the God of Israel*, Neil MacDonald offers a creative and provocative attempt to rethink this question—indeed, to rethink metaphysics as a whole—from the standpoint of divine self-determination.

MacDonald's central thesis is simple enough: the mode of all divine action is self-determination. God acts by determining himself to be the one who acts. In other words, God acts by directing his own identity, by acting *on his own being*. According to MacDonald, all divine action can be understood along these lines. God is creator, for example, simply because he determines himself to be the world's creator. This determination is strictly something God does *to himself*.

The book's most insightful—and most challenging—thesis arises at this point: if God had *not* determined himself to be this world's creator, the world would nevertheless be exactly the same, except that it would not be identified as God's creature. "We are not saying this world…would be a different world in terms of its natural properties, were it not created by God," MacDonald insists; indeed, "there could well have been…a world identical to the one we inhabit that was not created by God" (p. 34). If we ask, then, how the predicate "created by God" can be true of the world "without it being the case that anything is said or implied about the natural or material properties of the world," MacDonald replies that the predicate "created by God" simply describes something God does *to himself*. It "does not imply anything at all" about the nature of the world (p. 35).

This line of argument is, of course, an extremely radical reassertion of Karl Barth's critique of natural theology. Here, there is no inherent connection between creator and creature, nature and grace. The only point of contact lies in God's own self-determining act—an act which is itself the wholly contingent, wholly unnecessary relation between God and world.

This understanding of creation, MacDonald notes, "minimizes the importance of any…interaction between theology and science," since "one could have *two identical worlds* one of which it would be true to say that God determined himself to be the creator of it and the other not" (p. 40). In a nutshell, what this means is: no natural theology!

MacDonald also argues that his concept of self-determination can lay the basis for a new "biblical metaphysics" which can account for the way God acts in relation to the world. Just as God becomes the world's creator through an act of self-determination, so God "gets himself into the world" by determining himself to be in a personal space-time relationship with his creature (p. 67). Against the classical conception of God as acting providentially in history "from eternity," MacDonald insists that God has a place in the world, and that God acts from *within* the world's history. God determines himself to be part of his creation, to remain in our time after the act of creation (this, MacDonald suggests in one of his provocative exegetical engagements, is the meaning of the seventh day of creation in Gen.

2:2–3). God therefore "has time," he "has a history." In contrast to a classical metaphysical construction in which God eternally determines what will happen in time, MacDonald thus argues that God simply "determines *himself* to be within our time," so that God "comes along with us" in personal relationship (p. 79).

Further, God determines himself to be infinitely temporal and infinitely spatial, so that he has a time and place within the world which is nevertheless "peculiar and exclusive to him…as one of the divine perfections" (p. 86). And if we want to understand the nature of this peculiar divine (*ad intra*!) space, we must point to the resurrection: "to say Jesus has been raised is to say that he is in God's space, the space peculiar and exclusive to God" (p. 89). On this basis, MacDonald also sketches a christological reformulation, according to which "human history [is]…present to God *ad intra*," so that (following Richard Bauckham) the human identity of Jesus *is* the divine identity (p. 239).

This whole book bristles with penetrating insights, surprising possibilities, and explosive ideas—and each stage of the argument is developed through impressive skirmishes into Old Testament exegesis, historical theology, modern philosophy, and Barthian dogmatics. In the end, however, I was not quite convinced. The problem, I think, is that MacDonald's concept of self-determination remains too narrowly formalistic and analytical, so that one is left with the feeling that this concept just doesn't *do* very much after all.

MacDonald has a lot to say about logic and rationality, and he suggests that the "litmus test" for his thesis is whether it is "logically consistent" (p. 133). But logical consistency is hardly an adequate litmus test for a theological proposal of this scope. When the problem of God's spatiality is raised, for example—in what sense can God said to be spatial if his location cannot be defined by geometrical description?—MacDonald merely assures us: "it is enough that 'God determines himself to be in a place in this world'…is a logically consistent claim" (p. 117). But this is clearly *not* enough, since there is all the difference in the world between the (minimal) formal requirement of logical consistency and the material requirement of a convincing explanation. Concepts in dogmatic theology ought to have real explanatory power; even if they can't clear up every problem, they should certainly "prove themselves" by reaching explanatorily beyond the safe circle of tautology (after all, any tautology is logically invincible—but that doesn't mean it explains very much!).

It seems to me that MacDonald could thus refine his proposal, not by altering its fundamental thesis—that the mode of divine action is self-determination—but by allowing the formal questions of "rationality" and "logical consistency" to recede into the background, and by concentrating explicitly on the development of a more expansive, more differentiated, and more discursive account of self-determination. Of course, Karl Barth's doctrine of election is itself precisely such an attempt to develop an expansive christological conception of divine being as self-determining being; and Barth's own ontological construction (cf. also the interpretive work of Robert Jenson and Bruce McCormack) clearly indicates that the concept of self-determination need not be reduced to tautology, but can exercise an extraordinary explanatory power which makes itself felt in every corner of the dogmatic loci.

I voice these criticisms, then, as a friend and ally of MacDonald's proposal. I think a new ontological vision of divine action as divine self-determination is precisely the way forwards

for contemporary dogmatics; and I believe one of the resources for this ontological thinking is a radical recovery of Barth's critique of natural theology (as a corollary of Barth's christological actualism). So I think MacDonald's proposal is of tremendous value, even if the concept of self-determination needs to be developed in a much more refined and more expansive way than it is here.

One final note: MacDonald's radical critique of natural theology—"the world would be the same even if God didn't create it!"—may be going too far (and it clearly rests on an insufficiently *historical* construal of "the world"), but it is nevertheless commendable as a sharp intervention in contemporary theology. In many quarters, "creation" has by now become an axiom which is allowed wholly to determine the structure of christology, reconciliation and eschatology alike. Still, I'm not convinced that this stance should eliminate the significance of dialogue with the natural sciences, as MacDonald suggests. On the contrary, dialogue with science may play an important role in interpreting the "site" or "situation" in which the event of God's self-determining action takes place. If God interrupts the natural order in a new event of self-relation to the world (thus constituting the world as "creature"), then it is of great significance to understand *what kind of world this is* which God interrupts and reconfigures. For example: the core event on which theology reflects is the resurrection of Jesus; and although this event is unthinkable for natural science, the *site* of this event (i.e. a dead human body) *is* an object of scientific knowledge, and it is precisely this site which the resurrection interrupts and reconfigures.

In other words, although there is no direct trajectory from scientific knowledge to a knowledge of divine action, science may nevertheless help us to understand the situation in which the divine action takes place, and the kind of reconfiguring which this action produces. And if this is the case, might it also be possible that a profoundly *atheistic* interpretation of the natural world is in fact more useful for theological reflection than any explicitly religious reading of nature?

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A Response to Benjamin Myers' Review of *Metaphysics and the God of Israel*

I would like to thank Ben Myers very much for his review of my *Metaphysics and the God of Israel*. I should say from the outset that I have absolutely no problem with the kind of criticism directed toward what I have written. It would be hypocritical to write a book of this kind and not expect—indeed, not to want—its fundamental hypotheses to be subjected to criticism Popperian style. If the main claims of the book are deficient then we must come up with something better.

Ben says that concepts in dogmatic theology ought to have "real explanatory power" (material explanation) rather than operate in the realm of "tautology." I couldn't agree more. So let us look again at what I say. Let me take up one of my central examples of divine self-determination at work: *God determined himself to be the one who created all things; therefore he is the one who created all things; therefore, the (this) world was created by God.* Is this a tautology? I don't think it is. I don't think this can be said to be a tautology or not to

satisfy the criterion of material explanation.

There is a simple reason for this. The initial proposition involves a verb describing an action: (a) God determining himself, and (b) determining himself in a particular way, usually an action described by a uniquely identifying description. It certainly would have been something more akin to tautology had it not involved an action-descriptor. Suppose I had said "Jones is six feet tall; therefore he is over five feet nine inches tall"—or better: "God is the creator of the world; therefore, the world was created by God"; *then* we would be in the realm of mere logical consistency. That our language here is elevated to the level of verbs rather than adjectives makes a fundamental difference here.

The point is this: if my argument is logically consistent then clearly divine self-determination would be an explanation of the world—if divine self-determination as regards satisfying the action descriptor "the one who created [verb: always look for the action!] the world" is true. And it seems to me it is worth considering whether it is true, because then it would be the explanation of, e.g., the world (but only if the argument is logically consistent of course!).

Another way of putting the same point is: supposing that the very world in which I breathe, eat, sleep and so forth had come into existence by God determining himself to be its creator—what follows from this claim? Initial answer: I can say that the world in which I breathe, eat, sleep, etc, was created by God (Israel's God). I can say it. And I can say it rationally and without any kind of timidity in the face of non-Christian intellectuals! (I can say more of course, and I will come to this). To paraphrase something Hans Frei said in a review of Eberhard Busch's biography of Barth: a theologian is about imaginatively re-describing the biblical world in such a way that it comes to be recognized or at least taken seriously as the very same world in which we live.

Stephen Webb's recent review* makes a similar criticism when speaking of the argument: *God determined himself to be in our time; therefore he is in our time; therefore our time has God in it*. He says this is a tautology. It isn't. "God is in our time; therefore God is in time"—*this* is a tautology. What I have above is a material explanation. If God is in our time, how did he get there? Possible answer: he determined himself to be in our time (here we have an action sentence).

But there is another issue. We have to decide whether this is divine self-determination *without* natural theology or divine self-determination *with* natural theology. Granted that God determined himself, which specific instance of self-determination took place? I ask this because I don't think we can say that divine self-determination necessarily excludes natural theology: "God determines himself to be the creator of the world" is clearly compatible with natural theology (e.g. "God determined himself to be the creator of all things in accord with his nature").

Divine self-determination is basic and sufficient in itself for the truth of God creating the world. This means that divine self-divine determination can take place in such a way that renders natural theology false (and therefore conditionally impossible as it were—in the world in which we live). I put it this way in the book:

* Published in *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 15:1 (2008): 94-97.

"If we were to represent the world in terms of a package, we could imagine it to be stamped with the words 'created by God'. But note well: the stamp itself tells us nothing about the package itself other than the fact that it was created by God. It tells us nothing about the package itself, regarding its contents, for example. In other words, the stamp tells us nothing about the natural properties of the package. The stamp acts simply as a designator, not a description" (p. 33).

"Crucially then: we cannot infer from the natural properties of the package to the claim that it was created by God. The natural properties of the package are not the reason that the package is stamped with the words 'created by God'. What explains the stamp is that God determined himself to be the creator of the package. Nothing more and nothing less" (p. 33).

In order to explain this concept, in Part I of the book I invoked a thought experiment of two identical worlds—identical in terms of natural processes and laws—only one of which God has created. If this was possible, and if it turned out that our world is the one created by God (as it is obviously in the book), then our world is a world in which any kind of natural theology—be it based on motion, cause and effect, gravitational constants, etc.—is impossible.

Our answer to the question, whether "all things" is truly designated by the predicate "created by God" can only be based on the answer to the question, whether God has determined himself to be the creator of all things. This and this alone. It is creation "from above" rather than "from below." Moreover: according to this account, God does not act through his nature (if he has one), but he acts as a divine self-determining person. It is a kind of "neo-Chalcedonian" account of divine action, and of creation in particular.

But if natural theology is possible in our world, then this world cannot have an identical world not made by God. I follow Brian Davies' excellent book, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*.† Davies quotes Herbert McCabe on Aquinas's conception of cause: a cause is "a thing exerting itself, having its influence or imposing its character on the world." He continues: "On this account, to know that A caused B is to understand B as something that flows from the nature of A, something brought about by A insofar as it is acting in its characteristic way." This means that, for Aquinas, "a cause and its effect are intimately connected. They are not simply instances of objects or events which we observe to be constantly conjoined as the philosopher David Hume suggested. In what way are cause and effect intimately connected? An effect, for Aquinas, can be said to flow from (or even: participate in) its cause because the cause is a thing of a certain kind with a definite way of being or working."

To quote McCabe on Aquinas: "When you know what something is, you know what it is likely to do—indeed it is the same thing fully to understand the nature of a thing and to know what it will naturally do. Thus a causal explanation is one in terms of the natural behavior of things. When you have found the cause there is no further question about why this cause should naturally produce this effect, to understand the cause is just to understand that it naturally produces this effect."‡ This, in essence, is Aquinas's analysis of causation.

† Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 62-64.

‡ Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 101.

For Davies, this is no less relevant to Aquinas's view of God's relation to the natural world: "Things in the world reflect or reveal something of what [God] is because they come from him, because he is their cause or that from which they flow."

Now from the point of view of this analysis, the reason there cannot be an identical world not created by God is that this world created as it was by God has God's character flowing through it, in the sense that it is the effect that the cause would naturally produce were it to produce a world. And since God's nature has a *sui generis* character, there can only be one such world. For Aquinas, then: no identical world not created by God. Nevertheless, we can see how natural theology is entirely plausible: God's nature continues to function as a description of the nature of the world in virtue of Aquinas's analysis of causation. It is not a mere designator!

Of course, I am inclined to think I cannot accept Aquinas's analysis of causation because it presupposes natural theology. So my analysis of divine self-determination without natural theology does not presuppose Aquinas's analysis of causation! In fact it really only presupposes that God is a person, not that he has a nature. That is, even if God has a nature, it is not relevant to the nature of the world. God does not require a nature to act. As to the question whether God has a nature, I will only point out that Claus Westermann makes it clear that, in creation, the people of Israel only identify God in his acts and do not presuppose a being as it were behind the acts.

But let me end on Ben's fascinating thematic point of departure from which he launched his review. Ben mentions "the relation between nature and grace." If I were asked to say where the historical precedent for my view of divine action lies, I would say it lies with Luther. Think of Luther's claim on God as the promising divine identity who promises us forgiveness of sins and, by extension, the gift of eternal life. Without going into the details of Luther's thought on this matter: suppose I believe myself to be precisely the one who has been promised eternal life in this way. If this is true, then God has promised me the gift of eternal life—which means that my belief is true. But now suppose an identical world in which I exist but God does not. In this world, I also believe that I have been promised the gift of eternal life. But it is not true, I am wrong. But of course the two worlds are identical in this regard. There is no difference as regards my "ontic" status between one world and the other.

This is of course not true in Aquinas's world as regards grace. For Aquinas, in the world which God created and in which I believe I have received grace, I receive an "ontic" infusion of grace. In the world which God didn't create (and which doesn't exist) and in which I believe I have received grace, I do not receive an "ontic" infusion of grace. So for Aquinas, the worlds are not identical.

Daphne Hampson's book, *Christian Contradictions*, speaks of a distinction between Catholic (Thomist) and Protestant (Lutheran) approaches to grace in terms of an "ontic" model and a "status of relations" model.§ What I have to say corresponds to these two different kinds of models. I found her book very illuminating and, after I had finished the

§ Daphne Hampson, *Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Metaphysics book, it made me think of writing a kind of sequel, placing the work in the historical context of the contrasts between the Thomistic and Lutheran visions.

So there are these two great—perhaps irreducible—theological traditions, and I belong to the tradition of Luther, Bultmann (think of his undemythologizable analogical understanding of divine action), and Barth.

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***Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1: Prolegomena* and *Vol. 2: God and Creation*. By Herman Bavinck. John Bolt (ed.), John Vriend (Trans.). Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2004, 685 pp.; 697 pp., $49.99 (each)**[**]

We should be extremely grateful to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society for their work in bringing this important, stimulating publication to an English readership. First, a brief word about the contents of these volumes. After John Bolt's useful introduction to Bavinck, volume one, *Prolegomena*, covers the nature and method of dogmatic theology, the historical formation of dogma including Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics, and the distinct "principia" (foundations) of theology. This includes the "external" *principium:* revelation as general and special, and the nature, inspiration, and attributes of Scripture; and the "internal" *principium:* faith. Here one finds helpful, nuanced discussions of revelation and history; the incarnation, language, and the Bible; and the relationship of Scripture and confession in the task of theology. In volume two, *God and Creation*, the greater portion is devoted to the doctrine of God. Under this heading one finds wide-ranging treatments of God's knowledge, names, and attributes (incommunicable and communicable), with a separate, lengthy discussion of the Trinity. We also read here of the divine counsel and decree, which forms an entrance to the doctrine of creation. Parts four, five, and six cover the creation of Heaven and Earth, the image of God, and providence, respectively. There is much here that will delight and edify the reader. Both volumes (volume three has been released as well, and the final volume (4) is forthcoming) are presented very attractively in hardcover, with a bibliography and Scripture, name, and subject indexes. All of Bavinck's own footnotes have been retained and updated in form, and the subparagraph numbers of the second Dutch edition (and following editions) have also been retained in this edition. Both are excellent editorial decisions which render the final product that much more useful.

In a review-commendation of this length I cannot hope to provide a justly comprehensive picture of the contents, let alone the virtuosity, of these volumes. Any portion could be extracted and examined here with great profit. In fact, for fuller analyses of Bavinck's work that are still useful I commend the reviews of Geerhardus Vos.†† Instead, having noted its contents I would like to offer some reflections on Bavinck's commitments

[**] Reprinted by kind permission of *Ordained Servant* (Vol. 16, Aug/Sep, 2007). http://www.opc.org/os.html?article_id=57.

†† Available in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1980, 2001), pp. 475-93.

as a way of commending his work. In doing so, this reviewer hopes Bavinck will eventually become familiar not only to ministers and teachers but to many of the faithful as well.

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) was an extraordinarily astute, knowledgeable man with a depth of commitment to his God that is just as palpable in these pages as is his fervent love of the gospel and the Church. Some of the more doxological portions of his *Dogmatics* compare favorably with the most familiar lofty, moving passages in Augustine and Calvin. What especially impresses, however, as one moves methodically through these tomes is Bavinck's *integrity*. When faced with a challenge to the Reformed faith as he understood it, Bavinck did not simply content himself with repeating and resting in slogans, or treat his counterparts with trite dismissals of their work. Instead, he seems to have learned from everyone he read, even as he often ultimately provided a penetrating, devastating critique of their arguments. His integrity as a theologian is most evident, however, in the way his doctrine of Scripture comes into contact with the hard questions of exegesis: he refuses to gloss over the truly difficult questions with which every careful reader of Scripture meets, and yet will not allow these difficulties to throw into question what he recognizes the Scriptures clearly to teach. Further, Bavinck has an informed understanding of the problems and challenges of exegesis, yet he does not revel childishly in the ambiguities that a not-yet-sight faith inevitably encounters. At least in this context, his commitment to Scripture as *principium* actually *functions*—it has "teeth"—in the (to conflate metaphors) "nuts and bolts" of exegesis. Here I am convinced he has much to teach us.

At the same time, for all its considerable virtues, Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* is, of course, not the last word on Reformed theology. In fact, later generations have offered important corrections and modifications of his work, and future generations of Reformed theologians will no doubt continue to do so. For example, on the relationship of revelation, reason, and knowledge Cornelius Van Til represents an internally-consistent corrective to the relevant sections in volume 1 (and portions of volume 2) in Bavinck. Also, many of Bavinck's intuitive redemptive-historical insights are developed and given much more coherent expression in the later work of Vos and in the work of those who have followed his lead in biblical theology. At the same time, the careful reader of these two volumes recognizes that neither Van Til's nor Vos's contributions can be fully appreciated without a good handle on Bavinck's system. Indeed, they both seem to have drunk very deeply at the well of Bavinck even where they endeavor to correct or develop his ideas.

A careful study of Bavinck could hardly be more timely. In his day, the light of Reformed theology had nearly gone out in his land. The first great step toward its recovery, as Vos recognized in his review of Bavinck, was careful historical study of the great texts and figures of the Church, not only sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theologians but the patristic and medieval fathers as well. This responsible attention to the sources, abundantly evident in Bavinck's *Dogmatics*, provided the necessary perspective on how and where Reformed theology had lost its way. The threat he recognized as a nineteenth-century Reformed theologian was twofold: the emerging experiential, consciousness, and rationalist theologies of Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Kant on the one side; and the more proximate Lutheran and Pietist challenges on the other. If the truth claims of the Reformed faith were directly subverted in the former, it was the very integrity of the Reformed tradition as such that was at stake in the latter. This historical study helped, then, to clarify just what it meant to be Reformed in theology and, inevitably, this brought Bavinck back to the careful, meticulous

exegesis of the text of Scripture itself. When it came to the Reformed theologians he recognized the need to be fully and humbly informed by the fathers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but not to reproduce or "repristinate" them simplistically. Thus Bavinck's historical study of the catholic, Reformed tradition did not substitute—nominally or functionally—for exegesis (something prevented by his Reformed doctrine of Scripture) but instead drove him, as it should have, to the authoritative text of Scripture itself. And this is one reason why Bavinck is so timely: a constant, fruitful interplay of Scripture, confession, and contemporary context which always resolves in an unabashedly dependent resting in the testimony of the Word of God. Bavinck has much to say to us regarding what qualifies as a Reformed theology of justification, or creation, or inerrancy,# or the very concept and method of exegesis and theology—each of these press home the question of the distinctive integrity of the Reformed tradition, and thus recall Bavinck's own concerns. And what does he teach us? Many things, but at least this: for Reformed theologians the risky temptation in opposing error is to relinquish much in order to protect much, to compromise the integrity of the Reformed theological *system* in order to safeguard an affirmation it holds in common with other traditions. This was not an option for Bavinck, who repeatedly gives expression to the indispensable unity of the Reformed faith, and regularly brings this unity to bear on the questions with which the Church is confronted. Indeed, as Bavinck's eminent cross-Atlantic counterpart, Benjamin B. Warfield, also understood, for all the important ideas held in common with other traditions, the Reformed faith needs to be sharply distinguished not only from gross error but also from every form of inconsistent Calvinism. Thus, in the challenges to Reformed theology posed today by varieties of post-conservatism on the one hand, and of pan-confessionalism on the other, one could justifiably note the eerie similarity to challenges in Bavinck's day, and hope that we will learn much from his robust defense and commendation of the Reformed faith in its unity. In this respect Bavinck's careful interaction with the theology of Julius Kaftan in volume 1 is especially instructive.

I noted above that Bavinck has not given us the last word in Reformed theology. It should be added that, in my view at least, ongoing work in systematic theology will not advance much if it neglects to wrestle honestly and frequently with the gems in this great work (most of which are, in my view, to be found in volume 3). Reformed theologians of our day must return over and over in their pursuits to the meticulous task of exegesis, as Bavinck faithfully did. With this duty in view, the student of Bavinck will find that patient pondering over the *Reformed Dogmatics* is a spiritual feast. It is that kind of theology that deepens and enriches the faith of a people for whom "faith turns into wonder; knowledge terminates into adoration; and their confession becomes a song of praise and thanksgiving. Of this kind, too, is the knowledge of God theology aims for. It is not just a knowing, much less a comprehending; it is better and more glorious than that: it is the knowledge which is life, 'eternal life' (John 17:3)." For these reasons and many others, this is truly a publication event worthy of rejoicing. We can hope and pray that this project will encourage the kind of theological work for which its author is so greatly revered—the constant commitment to patient exegesis, the responsible and informed interaction with history, the churchly

Analysis of Bavinck on the question of the inerrancy of Holy Scripture must now account for Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *God's Word in Servant Form: Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck and the Doctrine of Scripture* (Greenville, S.C.: Reformed Academic Press, 2008). Contrast A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging Evangelical Perspectives* (Leicester: Apollos, 2007).

sensibility, and the keen perception into the concerns and needs of the present time. These are the classic priorities of Reformed theology, and they—and we—are deepened and advanced in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*.

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***Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. By Herman Bavinck. John Bolt (ed.), John Vriend (Trans.). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006; 685 pp. $49.99.**§§

I can't remember when I first obtained a copy of, *My Reasonable Faith,* by Herman Bavinck. But from that day to this, I longed to see his four-volume work in dogmatics published in English. And now, thanks to the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, my dream is being realized.

Having now read most of volume 3 (and all of the first two), I'll simply say that I've seen nothing for a long time that compares with this work. Let me give you a few of my reasons for saying this.

First, Bavinck's command of the theological literature of the whole Christian church, through all of its history, is truly amazing. He continually brings forth nuggets of wisdom from theologians of virtually every tradition. His incredible erudition has produced his carefulness, accuracy, and balance. His discussions are cogent and satisfying, and his conclusions are judicious.

A second reason is his thoroughness. Theology books often leave me with more questions than answers. But Bavinck's discussions are so full and complete, that I am seldom left with any questions at all. And even when I differ with him on minor points, his position is clearly within the bounds of the system of doctrine set forth in the great Reformed confessions. Indeed, his respect for these documents is clearly evident throughout these volumes.

I am also impressed by the clarity of this work. Credit for that is partly due to the translators, who here and there provide clarifying additions (usually in brackets) for the benefit of English readers. If Bavinck was as clear in the original Dutch as he is in this fine translation (and from all I've heard, he was), then it is no wonder that this work has long been regarded as the best statement of the Reformed system of doctrine since Calvin's Institutes.

Although the original edition of these volumes is now a hundred years old, it is amazing how useful Bavinck is for our generation. A good example is his discussion of "The Obedience of Christ for Us" (pp. 377-81). Here he shows how the Bible unites the passive and the active obedience of Christ, and makes both together the basis of our justification. I

§§ Reprinted by kind permission of *The Orthodox Presbyterian Church*. http://www.opc.org/review. html?review_id=128. January 2007.

am reminded of Solomon's saying, "Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See, this is new'? It has been already in the ages before us" (Eccl. 1:10).

I once heard a minister of Dutch background say something like this: "Everything has been downhill in the Reformed churches in Holland since Bavinck." I tended to agree with that opinion, and now my conviction is even stronger. It is hard to read Bavinck without feeling that he is speaking directly to the churches of our day. Not many books written today give as many helpful insights as these volumes by Bavinck. I already regard them as my most valuable theological resource.

True, they are expensive (though I've seen them on various websites for about $30 per volume). But I haven't seen anything for a long time that compares with them for value! I hope that every pastor and every other serious student of theology will obtain and carefully study Herman Bavinck's *magnum opus.*

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***God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*. By Lieven Boeve. New York: Continuum; 2007; 212 pp., $29.95.**

Lieven Boeve is professor of fundamental theology at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. In his earlier book, *Interrupting Tradition* (Eerdmans, 2003), he analyzed the relation between the Christian narrative and its postmodern context, and he argued for the openness of the Christian story to encounters with otherness. In this new work, Boeve continues to pursue this approach to contextual theology by developing a methodology of a contextual "theology of interruption."

Boeve's proposal is set against the backdrop of correlation methods in modern theology (e.g. Tillich, Schillebeeckx, Küng, Tracy). While theologians such as Barth and Milbank assume a basic *discontinuity* between Christian discourse and its secular context, the correlation method presupposes a fundamental *continuity* between faith and its context. But Boeve seeks to move beyond both these approaches by envisioning Christian faith as that which interrupts and reconfigures its context. "Interruption" thus functions as an alternative to both continuity and discontinuity. On the one hand, interruption is opposed to correlationist understandings of continuity, since faith is a radical new intrusion into the existing context. And on the other hand, interruption is opposed to conceptions of sheer discontinuity, since the interrupted context is altered but does not cease to exist. Interruption is the event in which an existing narrative is sharply halted and problematized, in order then to be opened up and propelled in a new direction. There is thus both continuity (since the *same* narrative is reconfigured and redirected) and discontinuity (since the narrative is forever changed by this new incursion). Indeed, interruption occurs precisely "where discontinuity and continuity encounter one another" (p. 103).

So in contrast to any mere "correlation" between faith and its context, Boeve calls for a radical "recontextualization" of faith's context. This means that, although dialogue with the context can never be suspended, we must resist the correlationist longing "for harmony and synthesis between tradition and context," and foreground instead the Christian faith's own

"particularity, contextuality, narrativity, historicity, contingency, and otherness" (p. 40). For Boeve, therefore, the fundamental datum for theological method is the fact that Christian faith is always one contingent possibility amidst a plurality of others. This confrontation of faith with plurality and otherness sets in motion the process of recontextualization. Faith is neither a (discontinuous) "counter-culture" nor a (continuous) "partner" of secular culture—instead, it is the irreducibly singular *interruption* which takes the cultural context and opens it anew towards the reality of God.

Boeve takes this model of "interruption" and uses it to rethink diverse themes such as religious experience, sacramental rites, the relation between faith and science, the apophaticism of contemporary spirituality (which he nicely describes as "something-ism"), and the place of christology in interfaith dialogue. But the richest and most valuable part of the book is his analysis of time and apocalyptic in the final chapter. Here, he rightly notes that the demythologizing tendency to purge the Christian message of its apocalyptic dimension "introduce[s] a perception of time that makes it impossible in principle to authentically conceptualize the radicality of the Christian faith" (p. 188). Following Johann-Baptist Metz, Boeve observes that the relation between God and time is structured *apocalyptically*: "God interrupts time" (p. 195). God is not part of the process of history, nor does God stand outside history. Rather, God is the *boundary* and *crisis* of history. Such a conception of time, Boeve argues, produces a "radical temporalization" of the world, with "a radical awareness of the irreducible seriousness of what occurs in the here and now." History thus becomes real history, and the future becomes a real future which cannot be reduced to a mere "seamless continuation" of progress, development or evolution (p. 197). The task of Christian theology is thus to submit to the interruptive judgment of God over history—and this is always a fundamentally *political* task, since the church must remind its cultural context that human history is also "a history of anxiety and the cry for justice." In this way, Christian faith "disrupts the histories of conqueror and vanquished, interrupting the ideologies of the powerful" (pp. 201–4).

Although this book is shaped mainly by discussions in modern Dutch-language theology, I think Boeve's methodological proposal is of much broader significance. The central argument is crisp and decisive, and Boeve's thought is often fresh and energetic. Even though he mounts a compelling critique of correlationist approaches, his proposal might best be understood as an attempt to modify and nuance (and so to sustain) the liberal correlation method. After all, Boeve still perceives a fundamental correlation between faith and its context, but he adds the crucial qualification that this is a correlation between an *interruptive faith* and an *interrupted context*, a context which has already been radically altered and re-structured by the divine action.

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***The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se*. By Matt Jenson, London: T&T Clark, 2007; 202 pp., $39.95.**

The doctrine of sin has fallen on hard times in recent decades, especially in the wake of Karl Barth's argument that we can speak of sin only in the light of grace, so that an

independent "doctrine of sin" becomes illegitimate. Of course, Barth himself developed a massive doctrinal account of sin; but his methodology has made subsequent generations of theologians reticent about this theme. Indeed, in a 1993 article, David Kelsey wondered: "Whatever happened to the doctrine of sin?"

It seems, however, that this situation is now changing. In recent years, Eberhard Jüngel has offered an intensive existential analysis of sin in his work on *Justification* (1999); Marilyn McCord Adams has offered a brilliant philosophical account of *Horrendous Evils* (1999); James K. A. Smith has argued for the hermeneutical significance of sin in *The Fall of Interpretation* (2000); Alistair McFadyen has demonstrated the ability of Christian language to interpret distinctively modern pathologies in *Bound to Sin* (2000); and younger scholars like Joy Ann McDougall (Emory) and Dirk Evers (Tübingen) are currently working towards new accounts of the doctrine of sin and its relation to theological anthropology.

In this elegant study, Matt Jenson has made his own timely contribution to this renewed exploration of Christian talk about sin. Jenson takes up the traditional metaphor of humanity as "curved in on itself" (*incurvatus in se*), and he argues that this metaphor can serve as a model for the interpretation of diverse forms of human sinfulness within the broader framework of a relational anthropology. If human personhood is constituted by relationships, then sin can be understood "as a violation, perversion and refusal of those relationships" (p. 2).

Jenson begins by exploring the development of the introversion metaphor in the theology of Augustine. He offers a charitable (perhaps too charitable!) interpretation of Augustine's theory of original sin—namely, that this is a "profoundly relational" affirmation of the involvement of all human beings with one another (p. 16). And he observes that, for Augustine, "freedom" and "autonomy" are mutually exclusive terms, since we are truly free only to the extent that we are turned towards God rather than towards ourselves. Nevertheless, Augustine threatens his own relational account of sin with his emphasis on a spirituality of inwardness. Such inwardness, as Luther later discovered, can itself become a powerful expression of sin, drawing us into "a disorienting spiral in on ourselves" (p. 45).

Luther thus built on—but radicalized—Augustine's understanding of sin, since he saw clearly that the *homo incurvatus in se* may be precisely the same as the *homo religiosus*. While Augustine envisioned salvation as the healing of human nature, Luther's more radical vision demanded nothing less than the *death and resurrection* of the sinful self. Still, both Luther and Augustine believed that the self is drawn out of itself only when it is turned towards God, so that its identity is located in him.

Luther's account of sin and personhood has been subjected to sharp critique, especially by feminist theologians who believe that such a conception serves to underwrite oppressive and abusive power structures. Jenson explores this critique as it is developed in the work of the post-Christian feminist, Daphne Hampson. Hampson advances a relational theory of selfhood, but she rejects the metaphor of sin as a "curving inwards." According to Hampson, this metaphor focuses on prideful egoism as the paradigm of human sinfulness, so that salvation is subsequently understood as a humbling of the proud. But she argues that this is a fundamentally masculinist conception of sin; women, after all, "have simply never been in the position of power which would give one the opportunity and the imaginative

resources to conceive of a prideful setting oneself in the place of God" (p. 103). The focus on pride, then, simply entrenches women in the sins to which they really do incline, especially to a sinful *diffusion* of the self in others. Jenson criticizes this argument for its rather simplistic characterization of the different gender-types of sin (men's sin as self-assertion; women's sin as self-denigration). But he notes that Hampson is right to stress the *diversity* of sins: we don't all sin in the same way. He thus takes up Hampson's two main categories: "we sin in both self-exaltation and self-denigration" (p. 128). Further, he accepts the crucial point that it is inadequate simply to regard "pride" as the paradigmatic form of all sins.

In the final chapter, Jenson thus asks whether the model of sin as curvature can be extended to describe "the (often radically) different experiences of people in sinning" (p. 130)—in particular, whether it can account for sins both of self-assertion and of self-denigration. These two main categories are in fact parallel to Barth's categorization of the paradigmatic sins of "pride" and "sloth." And Jenson argues that Barth's construal of the types of sin broadens the scope of our understanding of sin in a way that "anticipate[s] many of the concerns of feminists" (p. 183). But while Daphne Hampson thinks of freedom as the endeavor to extricate the self from all forms of dependence (on God and on others), Barth offers a more radically *relational* vision of freedom: "freedom is always freedom 'for another' and as such has one direction and one direction only. That is the direction of the Son, whose way is towards God and others" (p. 181).

And so Jenson concludes that the concept of *homo incurvatus in se* provides a model which can interpret a diverse range of sinful experiences, while foregrounding the relational structure of human personhood. To be human is to be in relation; to be a sinner is to pursue relationlessness. The church, therefore, should be viewed as the body of people who are "called out"—"out of the world, yes, but also out of ourselves." To be included in the church is to be among those "who live *excurvatus ex se*, finding…ourselves in Christ and in one another" (p. 190).

The Gravity of Sin is a lively and lucid account of Christian talk about sin, and a welcome contribution to the contemporary retrieval of this doctrinal theme. There are, of course, many remaining questions that a full reconstruction of the doctrine of sin would have to answer, such as:

- What is the connection between a relational model of sin and the broader social, political and economic structures of evil?
- What is the relationship between the dogmatic language of sin and contemporary biological, psychological and anthropological understandings of human personhood?
- What is the connection between the phenomenon of sin and human mortality?
- What is the relationship between specific experiences of sin and the universality of sin?

If, as Jenson proposes, the concept of introversion can be taken up as a general model for the interpretation of sin, then one might also be able to bring fresh—and properly *theological*—approaches to questions such as these.

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***The Expository Genius of John Calvin*. By Steven Lawson. Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2007; 160 pp., $19.00.**

When we think or talk of John Calvin it may be safe to assume that we often think of the theologian of the Reformation who wrote the Institutes, a continuing mainstay of Reformed theology. It is not often, however, that we consider John Calvin the preacher. While Calvin's preaching is certainly known, his method of preaching is often left unexamined. Dr. Steven Lawson has given us a glimpse of Calvin's methodology in his new book The Expository Genius of John Calvin.

The first chapter of this marvelous little book deals with an overview of the life of John Calvin. Lawson gives a brief synopsis of Calvin's life from birth to death. In the course of this synopsis he marks the significant events of the life of John Calvin such as his conversion, his arrival, dismissal, and re-entry into Geneva, and his continued faithfulness to the Scriptures in the midst of his contention with the Libertines (who were in reality antinomians)[***] regarding the Lord's Table. Calvin's life was marked by one of continued influence in the lives of people. And though he is dead, he still speaks—impacting and influencing those who desire to be faithful teachers of the Word of God.

Lawson has broken down the preaching style of Calvin into seven broad categories. These categories include: 1) Approaching the Pulpit; 2) Preparing the Preacher; 3) Launching the Sermon; 4) Expounding the Text; 5) Crafting the Delivery; 6) Applying the Truth; and 7) Concluding the Exposition. These seven categories form the chapters of the book following the brief overview of Calvin's life. Within the chapters, Lawson articulates with brevity and yet clarity thirty-one distinctives of Calvin's preaching.

This book is a virtual trove of insight into the expositional preaching of John Calvin. It is no surprise to me that Lawson has done his homework with regards to Calvin. Lawson is a consummate scholar who does his due diligence to accurately portray Calvin, as with anything to which he sets his hands. As a result, I can heartily commend any of Steve Lawson's work. He is a biblical expositor extraordinaire who transfers the same diligence and manifold grace of God exemplified in his preaching to his written material as well.

The value of this book is simply this—though none of us had the privilege of sitting under Calvin's preaching, we have the unique opportunity to study his preaching style. Today we have the opportunity to sit under the preaching and study the preaching style of great preachers such as John MacArthur and R. C. Sproul, but in this work, Lawson truly gives us a lucid insight into, as the book title states, the expository genius of John Calvin.

[***] Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 3 (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1975), 114.

The book covers the sermons of Calvin from introduction to conclusion, including his preparation to preach the truth of God's Word and his application of the truth of God's Word to the lives of his hearers.

One of the greatest instructions and insights into Calvin's preaching has to do with his application of the text. We may be tempted to think that due to Calvin's great theological mind that he just expounded great biblical doctrines without providing application. This is not the case. Listen as Lawson quotes Calvin: "Listeners, he said, should cultivate a 'willingness to obey God completely and with no reserve.' The Reformer added, 'We have not come to the preaching merely to hear what we do not know, but to be incited to do our duty.' For this reason, Calvin believed it was incumbent upon him, as a preacher, to make careful application. He saw it his pulpit responsibility to connect the Word to those allotted to his charge" (p. 104). It is instructive for preachers to know that having a great theological mind and the precise application of the greatness of God in the lives of believers are not necessarily meant to be mutually exclusive talents. When the Word is united by faith in application, then and only then will believers be incited to live as God would have them live.

In summary, I would commend this book for any student of the preaching of God's Word as it gives insight to the preaching of one of the great men of church history. This is the first in a series of forth coming books on other preachers, men such as Luther and Whitefield. I look forward to more of these in order that we may learn from the great heroes of faithful preaching who have gone before.

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***Christ in Focus: Radical Christocentrism in Christian Theology*. By Clive Marsh. London: SCM Press, 2005; xiv + 242 pp. $26.99.**

Modern Christian theology has seen a vigorous resurgence in trinitarian focus and it is against this trend that Clive Marsh argues in *Christ in Focus: Radical Christocentrism in Christian Theology.* For Marsh, Christian theology remains true to itself and its message only when it is defined by a radical Christocentrism. Toward this end, he contends for an experiential and corporate Christology that seeks to clarify how God—in Christ—is active in the world today. Two distinctive emphases are present throughout his proposal: *experientialism* and *relationality*. Related to experientialism, Marsh argues that Christocentric theology must interpret the contemporary experience of the "presence and action of God," for, the "Christ event goes on happening" (p. 17). Christology must not only account for the events of Jesus' historical life, but for the *ongoing* experience of Jesus in the believer as well. Concerning relationality, Marsh contends for a rigorously relational Christology in which the criterion for authentic Christologies is the degree of "human flourishing" within relationships (p. 180).

With these aims in mind, Marsh proceeds in three parts. Part I argues that just as Christ should be at the heart of Christian theology, Christology should be the focus of systematic theology. Against recent trinitarian trends in dogmatics, he argues that a properly conceived Christocentrism must be thoroughly trinitarian but that it should not posit the Trinity as its

starting point and fundamental locus (p. 71-74). The degree to which he succeeds in this regard is debatable.

Part II explores the form of Christology capable of sustaining just such a radical Christocentrism and does so through interaction with three modern theologians: Friedrich Schleiermacher, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Rita Nakashuma Brock. While not uncritical of them, Marsh finds elements of convergence with his own proposal. Not surprisingly, these center around experientialism and relationality. For example, Rauschenbusch's commitment to "Christ-society" is instructive to the extent that it invites interpreters of Jesus to "think creatively and positively…as to where, and with whom, Christ is present" (p. 138).

Part III delineates an experiential and relational Christology by addressing two fundamental questions: "What is Christ Today" and "Who is Christ today?" Toward answering the first, Marsh contends that God's presence in Christ can be located in (1) the embodiment of relationships, (2) as a spiritual presence, and (3) through words and images. Relating to Christ's presence in the embodiment of relationships, only certain kinds of relationships enjoin his presence, specifically those in which human beings are seen to "flourish" (p. 180). Along similar lines, Marsh contends that the optimal standard for evaluating Christologies is not "biblical or traditional" but relational. Christologies should be assessed by the degree to which "human beings flourish in the way they relate to one another" (p. 180). Regarding the second question, Marsh appropriates various concepts discussed earlier his interaction with Schleiermacher, Rauschenbusch, and Brock, and then advances eight statements (or theses) such as, "Jesus/Christ as God the inspiring life-giver" and "Jesus/Christ as the God who saves."

Marsh's *Christ in Focus* is certainly thought-provoking and demonstrates a careful reading of primary sources. Indeed, in the third chapter, measures are taken to assuage the potential uneasiness of those skeptical toward Christocentric approaches through his furnishing a list of potential dangers and distortions. However, I find Marsh's proposal less than satisfying on at least two fronts. First, while he claims a properly conceived Christocentrism will naturally be trinitarian (p. 72), the shape of his actual proposed Christology seems to fall short of this otherwise avowed criterion. Scant reference in made concerning the work of the Spirit as a unique person constituent of the triune life and, while often referring to the "spirit of Christ," little mention is made of the actual *person* of the Son. This is puzzling as it would seem rather axiomatic that a Christocentric theology claiming to be trinitarian would be saturated with references to the divine activities of Father, Son, and Spirit. Secondly, it is disappointing that Marsh dismisses so sweepingly the traditional atonement theologies which here merely deems "profoundly problematic" (p. 203). This is done rather hastily in the absence of any substantive engagement with the relevant scriptural material.

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***Faith within Reason*. By Herbert McCabe. Brian Davies (ed.). New York: Continuum, 2007; 184 pages, $24.95.**

Here is the latest collection of unpublished papers of the late Herbert McCabe, and what a treat it is. The combination of crystal logic, sparkling wit, and interrogative *fides quaerens intellectum*, deeply informed by Aquinas and richly modulated by Wittgenstein, are again on bravura display. McCabe was rather slipshod about his own work—we learn in the Forward by Denys Turner "how the first page of Herbert's celebrated lecture on the politics of John's gospel was eventually retrieved from his shoe where it was plugging a leaky sole"—so we must be immensely grateful to Brian Davies for his labor of retrieval.

McCabe defines theology as "thinking about what God has told us," and, following Thomas, sees theology as a practical matter. Reason serves revelation properly (a) when it tests church doctrine to make sure that it is about God's love and does not degenerate into a test of confessional loyalty, and (b) when it is concerned with human well-being. Wisdom is basically en-lightened common sense.

"A Very Short Introduction to Aquinas" is just what it says on the tin (a mere eighteen pages), but it is packed with goodies. "Thomas Aquinas thought that theologians don't know what they are talking about," McCabe says. "He was, I suppose, the most agnostic theologian in the Western Christian tradition." McCabe gives a helpful thumbnail sketch of Aquinas on virtue ethics, making clear that Aquinas believed that the foundation of Christian morality is our friendship with God. In turn, human society, when it is functioning rightly, is a community of friends. McCabe provocatively describes Aquinas as the first Whig (though, knowing McCabe, he might have said Marxist), declaring that he "would undoubtedly have welcomed the welfare state." And how's this for a great "Did you know?": "Aquinas says in one place that separation from God by sin has so distorted our emotional life that we do not enjoy sex enough."

Then there is "Forgiveness". It must be a sermon. And, boy, does McCabe nail grace. How's this for a winsome start: "It is very odd that people should think that when we do good God will reward us and when we do evil he will punish us. I mean it is very odd that Christians should think this, that God deals out to us what we deserve…. You could say that the main theme of the preaching of Jesus is that God isn't like this at all." In fact this image of a punitive God is "the view of God as seen from hell," such that damnation "must be just being fixed in this illusion." This is the illusion that defines the sinner. To see that this illusion *is* an illusion is to recognize that one is a sinner, and in this very self-knowledge one ceases to *be* a sinner.

This, in short, is McCabe's take on the prodigal son as he comes to his senses. "The rest of the story is not about the father *forgiving* his son, it is about the father *celebrating*…This is all the real God does, because God, the real God, is just helplessly and hopelessly in love with us. He is unconditionally in love with us." So it is not that if we are contrite, God will forgive us our sin. On the contrary, "You confess your sin, recognize yourself for what you are, because you are forgiven." Thus confession becomes a celebration, where you "come to put on the best robe and the ring on your finger and the sandals on your feet, and to get drunk out of your mind." Could Barth himself have put the case for grace more vividly?

For a third taster, the outstanding "On Evil and Omnipotence". McCabe says RIP to the theodicist's free-will defense, agreeing with Anthony Flew that it is "worthless", but disagreeing why. It is not, as Flew argues, because freedom is not incompatible with determinism—it is, insists McCabe—but rather because there is a mistaken understanding of freedom at work here, namely that God's activity and ours are in competition, as if (as I would put it) freedom were a zero-sum game. But as McCabe states: "The idea that God's causality could interfere with my freedom can only arise from an idolatrous notion of God as a very large and powerful creature—a part of the world." For the same reason, "the famous 'Argument form Design' (commonly attributed to William Paley) is a silly one."

McCabe is also excellent on evil as a *privatio boni*—and at his best with the funny example. Some people, he writes, assume that when we have described evil as a negation we are saying that evil isn't real. "But we (or I anyway) do not mean this at all. If I have a hole in my sock, the badness of this consists in the absence of wool where there ought to be some. This does not mean that the badness is illusory or unreal. If I jump out of a plane and discover that I have not got a parachute, it is of no comfort at all to be told that the absence of the parachute is not a real thing at all."

But McCabe concludes modestly. He hopes to have "disentangled a puzzle", but "When all is said and done, we are left with an irrational but strong feeling that if we were God we would have acted differently. Perhaps one of his reasons for acting as he did is to warn us not to try to make him in our own image."

What a splendid book, a book you don't so much read as have a conversation with. You will put it down feeling that you have been at a tutorial with a rare, witty, and very wise teacher, who even had the bonhomie and joie de vivre to offer you a single malt.

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***The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*. By Alister McGrath. New York: Doubleday, 2004; 306 pp., $14.95.**

This book is a survey of the intellectual history of atheism in the world of Western ideas. The central author's thesis is that atheism as an "empire of the mind" has passed its zenith and is in a state of rapid decline as a satisfying intellectual understanding of reality. McGrath at one time considered himself an atheist but came to embrace Christianity. He describes himself "as a wounded yet still respectful lover of the great revolt against God" (p. 175).

The book begins by saying, "The remarkable rise and subsequent decline of atheism is framed by two pivotal events, separated by precisely two hundred years: the fall of the Bastille in 1789 and that of the Berlin Wall in 1989" (p. 1). Indeed, McGrath puts forward a compelling argument that the sun of atheism reached its "high noon" (or "golden age") with the French Revolution, but set with the collapse of Soviet communism.

McGrath traces the intellectual foundations of atheism in modern Europe to the thought of Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud. He also outlines the alleged "warfare" between science and religion "that has come to dominate the corporate consciousness of Western culture" (p. 79). Atheists would like to view science (Darwinian evolution, in particular) as the Prometheus

that finally stole the celestial fires away from the gods, this liberating humanity from the primitive clutches of religion. McGrath undermines the myth by arguing that science and faith are not incompatible, albeit "the stereotype of the necessarily atheist scientist lingers on in Western culture at the dawn of the third millennium" (p. 111).

McGrath places a good bit of the blame for atheism's rise in the Western world on the shoulder of the Christian church itself for its "failure of religious imagination" (p. 113), particularly during the Victorian era. He traces the rise of "intentional atheism" in mystical romantic poets like Percy Shelley and in novelists such as George Elliot (Mary Ann Evans). The alleged weakness of Christianity during this era led intellectuals to view the faith as both empty and unappealing. From here McGrath moves on to trace "the death of God" in the West from the novels of Dostoyevsky, to the philosophy of Nietzsche, to the writings and plays of Camus, to the "suicide" of liberal Christianity as exemplified in Thomas J. J. Altizer's death of God theology—best remembered by the October 22, 1965 issue of *Time* magazine which rather triumphalistically declared on its cover, "God is dead." In its typical quest to be relevant, adapting itself to the spirit of the modern age, liberal Christianity embraced the godlessness of culture but found its secular "manifesto" turn into a veritable "suicide note" (p. 164) . The apex of Western atheism emerged on the heels of the statist atheism of the Russian revolution of 1917. The atheistic state would strive to eliminate belief in God both intellectually and culturally. Many, like Harvard theologian Harvey Cox, believed that the world would fast become a "secular city."

The collapse of faith and the triumph of atheism, however, did not happen as some expected. Having traced the rise of atheism, McGrath turns to outline its contemporary decline. He begins with a narrative testimony of his own exodus from atheism as a university student (pp. 175-79). McGrath then argues that "it is increasingly recognized that philosophical argument about the existence of God has ground to a halt" (p. 179). The best the skeptic can do with the God question is plead agnosticism. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly evident that, "The belief that there is no God is just as much a matter of faith as the belief that there is a God" (p. 180). The storied arguments against God's existence are just as circular as those of classical Thomism in favor of theism. Furthermore, in the post-World War era, McGrath claims that Christian thinkers and writers such as G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, and Flannery O'Connor have brought about "something of a re-birth of the 'baptized imagination'" which makes contemporary atheism appear unimaginative and uninteresting in comparison (p. 186). He also notes that "interest in religion has grown globally since the high-water mark of secularism in the 1970s, even in the heartlands of the West" (p. 190). This is even seen in everything from fascination with TV's Star Trek to the international explosion of Pentecostalism.

McGrath observes the rise of atheism during the modern era but anticipates its decline in the postmodern era. He describes postmodernism as "a cultural mood that celebrates diversity and seeks to undermine those who offer rigid, restrictive, and oppressive views of the world" (p. 227). Far from favoring atheism, this works against it, since atheism tends to be "strident" in its contention that "Belief in God is evil, and must be eliminated" (p. 229). Atheism is simply intolerant. An interesting and effective illustration of the disarray and weakness of contemporary atheism is offered by McGrath in the sad narrative of American atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair and the ironic anecdote that her son William converted to

Christianity (pp. 238-56). Atheism is no longer seen as a liberator of the human mind but as an oppressor.

McGrath concludes that the abiding influence of atheism may be in virtue of its having unwittingly aided in the reformation of Christianity. The rise of atheism in the West was undoubtedly a protest against a corrupted and complacent church yet, paradoxically, it has energized Christianity to reform itself in ways that seriously erode the credibility of its earlier criticisms. Where atheism criticizes, wise Christians mobilize toward reform (p. 277).

McGrath concludes by noting that atheism is "in something of a twilight zone" (p. 279). However, in the book's final words, he asks:

But is this the twilight of a sun that has sunk beneath the horizon, to be followed by the darkness and coldness of the night? Or is it the twilight of a rising sun, which will bring a new day of new hope, new possibilities—and new influences? We shall have to wait and see" (p. 279). The implication is that the future of atheism, in part, depends on the nature of religion (Christianity in particular). Repressive religion will evoke the resurrection of atheism; tolerant religion will keep it in the dark.

McGrath is to be commended for this helpful survey of the intellectual history of atheism in Western culture. His analysis of the current crisis within atheism and its precipitous contemporary decline is compelling. The book also properly situates the so-called "new atheism" promoted by the likes of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitches, Daniel Dennett, and others in an intellectual ghetto. Their attacks on religious faith appear less the battle cry of a resurgent movement than the last gasps of a failed cause.

There are several aspects of McGrath's analysis, however, that some—conservative evangelicals in particular—will find less than attractive. First, McGrath argues that Protestantism is in part responsible for the rise of atheism. In developing the supposed link between the Reformation and atheism, he accuses leading reformers like Zwingli and Calvin of divorcing the sacred from the secular (p. 200). He suggests that the reformation's emphasis on the sovereignty (connoting *distance*) of God and its emphasis on preaching and teaching, including its stark architecture, helped to engender atheism. For McGrath, Protestantism "has impoverished the Christian imagination, and by doing so, made atheism appear imaginatively attractive" (p. 206). On the other hand, McGrath is liberal in his praise of Pentecostalism, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, which he argues to have more successfully combined the sacred and secular, promote dynamic experiential faith, and, thus, resist atheism. McGrath is critical of any form of Protestantism "that is obsessed by theological correctness" or that commends "a purely 'text-centered' understanding of the Christian faith, seeing preaching as nothing more than teaching the contents of the Bible and spirituality as a deepened understanding and internalization of its message" (p. 213). This might make one "rigorously grounded in theological principles" yet fail in leading to "an encounter with the living God" (pp. 213-14). I find McGrath's reasoning here questionable. First, his argument that doctrinal precision and "text-centered" Christian faith somehow results in a less vibrant encounter with God is seriously debatable. Take, for instance, the rich experiential faith of the Puritan movement. Second, he does not examine the dangers of a lack of confessional precision, particularly in some Pentecostal circles.

Thirdly, McGrath advocates a certain level of tolerance within Christianity—in the name of staving off atheism—that would foment compromise of a firm stand for Biblical truth. To take one example, he argues that Christians should not strongly contend for the Biblical doctrine of eternal damnation: "Christian apologists cannot hope simply to assert such doctrines as eternal damnation and expect Western culture to nod approvingly" (p. 275). Should we not, though, proclaim Biblical truth, whether the world approves of it or not? Will not the gospel always prove an "offensive" to the unregenerate? Along these lines, one might ask if McGrath's analysis of the rise and fall of atheism is based more on sociology or the history of ideas than on theology. Is the existence of atheism a result of human intellectual activity alone, or is it also rooted in humanity's sinful rejection of God's sovereignty (Psalms 14, 53)? Is the question of atheism reducible to an academic debate over the contours of intellectual history, or is something much deeper afoot? Put differently, is it a reflection of the human head or the human heart?

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A Secular Age. By Charles Taylor. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007; x+874 pp., $39.95.

Over the past five hundred years we have progressed from a culture in which belief in God was the default position to one in which belief is just one of several options. A number of narratives have been offered by way of explanation. The subtraction story is among the more popular contemporary narratives. In that account we Westerners have been stripping away the occluding superstitions of religion until, liberated, we come to see this world as the only reality in the light of our own unbiased natural reason. In a word, the scientific and humanistic outlook eclipses the religious.

Charles Taylor offers a powerful challenge to this story by his own alternative narrative in his magnificent new work, *A Secular Age*, thereby furnishing a negative (defending the faith) apologetic for Christianity. For his positive (providing support for belief) apologetic, he wants to show how the challenges raised by modernity are best met by his own genial interpretation of Christianity. Taylor's style is reminiscent of "show and tell." What history and his arguments tell us on behalf of Christianity he also shows in telling manner. Specifically, he applies a hermeneutic principle of charity to his interlocutors' positions in a remarkably generous, even kind, way; unusual for scholarly work. And he is consistently transparent about the challenges facing his own position. In the course of his positive case, Taylor both identifies and seeks to avoid the unintended, counterproductive effects of certain earlier apologetics responding to the challenges of modernity. Here we will examine the pertinent arguments for Taylor's negative and positive apologetics, particularly against the test case of hell.

Secularization can be understood in three different senses: (1) the emptying of public places of God (i.e. from the economic, political and educational realms, etc.),(2) the fall off of religious belief and practice, and (3) changes in the conditions of belief (e.g. moving from belief as the default position to belief as one option among many). The third sense here refers to the possibility or impossibility of certain kinds of experience within the prevailing

background beliefs and belief-informed practices of a period. It is this sense of the term that occupies Taylor.

One way Taylor contests the subtraction story is to show how much more complex the interplay of a variety of changes is over a particular period. As part of this complexity, Taylor shows how new conditions of belief created possibilities toward exclusive humanism (i.e. exclusive of anything transcendent) *and* for new forms of religious belief. He strips the enlightenment narrative of its apparent inevitability or nothing-but-progress monolinearity. Changing attitudes toward nature exemplify this. In the typical subtraction story, interest in nature as an autonomous system is a milestone en route to exclusive humanism. But as Taylor indicates, a rising interest in nature was associated with a whole gamut of beliefs, including its own kind of devotion toward God as creator of an ordered cosmos. In retrospect, the subtraction narrative sees the new attention to the real individual exemplified in Renaissance art as movement toward autonomous individuality. Yet Taylor shows how this new focus reflects both a change in popular piety—an increasing attention to the person of Christ—and a new evangelical turning to the world.

What prompted those who moved toward exclusive humanism? While it is true that a constellation of changes formed new conditions of belief that made it possible to move in that direction, Taylor sees the decision as fraught with far from obvious value judgments. Reactions to the new modern order, "could very much depend on personal experience, temperament, and the affinities one felt" (264). The common deconversion story of many over the last two centuries puts the epistemological challenge of science to faith (especially evolution) in the explanatory forefront and attributes defection, however sad, to a kind of courageous honesty. Yet to take evolution as a faith defeater, since it ignores all the other alternatives between fundamentalism and atheism, is a plain intellectual error. When bad arguments have powerful historical effects, Taylor notes, we need supplementary explanation. For Taylor, it is the ethical part of a package of beliefs that performs this explanatory role.

What is the determining ethic here? Through a number of interlocking changes, a new view of the self became available that was congenial to exclusive humanism. Such changes included a rise in the centrality of the will†††, an instrumental stance toward nature, more modernized impersonal social regimes, the elevation of everyday life (compliments of Protestantism), and a devaluation of the body and of strong emotions, among others. Some of these changes were made possible by a new confidence in human effort, stemming from successful attempts by both governments and churches to make sweeping social reforms, to reorder the human world. So the ethical part of the disbelief package sees the apostatizing one as the embodiment of manly courage, honesty, independence, maturity, pride (in being the master of his or her meanings), human dignity and even a sense of invulnerability. Taylor notes that the more childish one's faith, the more likely one might cave in to such a posture.

††† Paul Johnson collaborates wonderfully with the rise in the centrality of the will: "Capitalism, in its religious aspect, was a retreat from public to private Christianity. It was a movement towards the freedom of the will and the individual…" Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 317.

Although science has not defeated religion on epistemological grounds, the prestige of the disengaged scientific stance toward the world spills over into an ethic which dictates what we will accept as reality. Clifford's "Ethics of belief" epitomizes the opaque constellation of sentiments at work here, a constellation to be made famously transparent in its lack of support by William James in his "Will to Believe". When it comes to the question of belief, Taylor observes, I have not only paleontology but "I can have a religious life, a sense of God and how he impinges on my existence, against which I can check the supposed claims to refutation" (567).

Basic to the subtraction story is the idea of historical progress. This too has spilled over into a general condescension of posterity toward earlier ages such that ideas and practices of premodern origin can be dismissed as "out of date" without any meaningful investigation of their intellectual credentials. Since its origin, this value prejudice has been and continues to be applied against Christianity.

By highlighting the non-scientific elements of the disbelief package, Taylor apparently undermines its credibility. Yet, as he acknowledges, this strategy is open to his opponents as well. Indeed, the purported ethical virtues of disbelief correlate negatively with the alleged childishness, self-deception, sentimentality, fear, dependence, and abasement of the religious outlook. Hence his positive apologetic is needed. And again, that apologetic is based in part on the superiority of Christianity addressing key problems arising from modernity. Yet in contrast to MacIntyre, for instance, Taylor celebrates many aspects of modernity, including elements of the modern self. Though he cannot accept the whole modern package, Taylor identifies himself as part of the "loyal opposition."

A striking element of contemporary Western societies is the high moral demand members place upon themselves. The recognition of an ever extended field of rights bearers which began as moral theory has become the common understanding of many Westerners who have also formalized (however incompletely) this commitment in their laws and policies. Again, for Taylor the terminus of Western secularization to date is exclusive *humanism*. Now this concern for and activism about our neighbors in Western thought derives from Christianity. Greek and Roman skepticism had no such inclination. So part of the question is whether and how this ethic can be maintained without its former Christian basis. That depends on its alternative moral sources.

What are the moral sources of contemporary exclusive humanism? By the time we get to Kant in the late eighteenth century, pride as a rational being is a significant moral resource, a substitute for Christian agape. Indeed, Kant's formulation of this idea in the dignity of a being who acknowledges only a self-given law (as against the heteronomy of obedience to purported external moral authorities) remains influential to this day. In Camus the ethic of honor to self is extended even further in a heady "narrative of self-authorization" where all meaning is up to us. But can the honor ethic sustain contemporary moral commitments? Taylor says no: "A solidarity ultimately driven by the giver's own sense of moral superiority is a whimsical and fickle thing. We are far from the universality and unconditionality which our moral outlook prescribes" (696).

If I owe it to my honor to help others, even heroic altruism is in essence non-communitarian, non-reciprocal. Debt to my honor may well leave me impatient with the recalcitrant with whom I may become despotic, as, for example, "scientific" socialism did in

the former Soviet Union. A self-oriented ethic of indignation at injustice can easily become hatred of others, since it had already projected all evil upon those others. But the Christian ethic of unconditional universal love avoids these problems, however far its practitioners may fall short in practice.

Loss of meaning in life is one of the unintended challenges of modern exclusive humanism. Even the disciplined routines of everyday life become highly problematic when, as Taylor notes, they are "unsupported by a believable narrative" (718). The loss of meaning shows starkly in relation to death. At funerals people today often seem to be at sea, embarrassed and confusedly avoidant. Taylor finds here a kind of negative testimony to the link between death and meaning, how death undermines meaning. Of significant love relations Taylor observes that, "because they are so significant, they seem to demand eternity" (728). In fact this is true of all joy, since its sense is diminished if it is aborted by death. Of course, these phenomena don't establish the truth of Christianity but they do show its comparative advantage in relation to central problems of existence. An argument from desire could be formalized following the pattern of Aquinas. If (a) all natural human desires can be satisfied, and (b) desire for ultimate meaning is a natural human desire, then (c) the desire for ultimate meaning can be satisfied. So if the finality of death undermines ultimate meaning by the loss of crucially significant love relations, death is not final.

On the possibility of enriching our moral sources, Taylor reflects on the having and raising of children. Surely there is a world to learn about human existence in this experience, much more than is generally surmised. The sheer wonder we feel, the tenderness, the attachment to the good of this other in unconditional love is among the deeper experiences of life. Again the challenge is over what outlook can make the best sense of this. While there is no reason in principle that exclusive humanists may not take away something significant here, Taylor postulates that parents who see aspects of God's image in the life of the child are the best explanation. He admits that this possibility needs further exploration and development.

But perhaps Taylor is being too generous. The message and meaning of the child ill comport with the self-authorization stance. The child carries a meaning we did not create and elicits deep responses beyond our will, both calling for and motivating a life of unqualified service to another whose life is seen as good in itself. Add to this the typical secular evolutionary materialist elements of exclusive humanism and it becomes harder than ever to find a basis for the meaning of the child who is, on that account, ultimately the accidental product of the blind physical causes of mutation and natural selection.

Though he does not refer to Peter Berger, Taylor's call to develop the argument from the child's life had already been addressed in a related way by Berger's third chapter of *A Rumor of Angels*. Berger has it that certain prototypical human gestures may constitute signals of transcendence or supernatural signs. The human propensity for order is one of these gestures. The reasoning goes this way: (a) in the observable historical human propensity to order reality there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to this order, (b) this impulse implies that human order in some way corresponds to a transcendent cosmic order, and (c) this impulse also implies that the transcendent order is such that humans can trust themselves and their destinies to it. Berger's motivating example is of a mother comforting a frightened child in the night. Is she telling a lie when she says "everything is all right"? For

Berger, every parent takes upon him- or herself the representation of a universe that is ultimately in order and ultimately trustworthy. So the parent is only telling the truth if the universe is so. Berger's reasoning here may best be interpreted as an argument from desire.

As Taylor notes, most modern believers are probably drawn to faith by desire for meaning in life and for the experience of God's love. To such believers, cosmic design arguments may appear dry and irrelevant. Indeed, Taylor sees substantial error in the use of such arguments, at least in the historical context of modernity. As the world began to be seen increasingly on a mechanical analogy, functioning according to the unchanging laws of nature, the need to invoke God's direct activity in nature receded. In response, a new apologetics arose, stressing God as the creator of this vast machine. But these apologetics ended up stressing creator-related attributes to the neglect of Christ's salvation. And by taking a point of view outside of religion—that it needed proof—these apologetics inadvertently reinforced that atheist presumption. They seem to share their opponents' hostility to mystery. Further, by claiming to interpret God's intentions from the law-like operations of nature, the door is opened for a new blaming of God by those who want to check how things actually operate in the world against the divine intentions.

Still, Taylor may be underestimating the significance of such argumentation in the contemporary era where, as he notes, science is the most prestigious institution and is still widely thought by both scientists and lay people to have undermined or defeated religion. The intelligent design movement may serve as a leading counterexample here. On the other hand, contemporary cosmic apologists are more likely to include Christ-specific apologetics as part of their larger package.

The new predilection for impersonal explanations of the world not only made God's direct activity explanatorily moot, but also helped contribute to a mood of distaste for a God who would "interfere" with the natural laws. The biblical God came to be seen by some as an arbitrary tyrant, "playing favourites in a capricious manner" (274). This was nowhere more in evidence than regarding the doctrine of hell, most of all in its Calvinist form of predestination to damnation of the vast majority of people and in the idea that a part of the enjoyment of heaven consists in witnessing the damned in torment. On Taylor's account, extreme Calvinism, the ramping up of damnation talk, and the juridical-penal model of sin and atonement contributed significantly to the disaffiliation of many and the rise of Deism. Taylor himself repeatedly invokes "the decline of hell" in his narrative, with approbation, alluding to the change in belief Walker documents in his book of the same title. And he holds up Charles Peguy as a salient positive example of Christian life and thought, including his universalism.

Is Taylor a universalist? He clearly leans in that direction. But here we will be concerned with how his stance on hell comports with his apologetics. We noted above that, among other elements, moderns reacted against the doctrine that the majority of people will be damned for eternity to hell. Taylor's argument against hell is part of an attempt to show how Christianity makes better sense of the problem of violence than exclusive humanism. It is part of his positive, comparative apologetic. If we see the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan including a violent destiny for those who do evil, then this "allows us to participate in our own version, cheering on the punishment of those evil-doers; or else, even inflicting it as God's militia" (671). And Taylor decries Old Testament "atrocities" by Israel in these terms.

But licensing violence violates Christianity's central command to love others. Modern universalism or the "decline of hell" therefore "seems to be a gain" (671).

Taylor also wants us to imagine God's ultimate triumph over violence as follows: "*Must* there be damned, as well as saved? The question is, whether this distinction between harmers and harmed is God's last word, whether the transforming power can go farther, can chase the violence into its ultimate lair, and conquer it" (671). So God's love and power might argue against at least an eternal hell as well.

But is it clear that divine judgment by itself warrants human violence? The Anabaptist peace churches have consistently eschewed violence while believing in a divine judgment for centuries. A common biblical rationale, apparently addressed to a readership interested in justice, for abstaining from violence is that judgment and recompense should be left to God. And if the biblical account Israel's violent conquest of the land is portrayed as instrumental to God's judgment, is it well to condemn it as "atrocity"? Part of Taylor's negative apologetic was to show how some criticisms of Christianity were misplaced. But he appears to agree with the criticism of hell. Of course, the doctrine is troubling to many modern believers. But as a friend of the modern self, might not Taylor (or we all) be inadvertently adopting the stance of those who could not abide mystery and who found heteronomy intolerable? Though it is easy to underestimate the love and mercy of God, Taylor's often beautifully Christian reflections may run up against the clear and ineluctable biblical doctrine of hell.

Or is there scripture against hell? If we bear in mind 1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6 and Ephesians 4:8-10, passages traditionally associated with the "harrowing of hell," the doctrine of a second chance at repentance and salvation after death might be constructible. Still, since these scriptures only purport to record a past event, to project this as repeated in the future is quite speculative. They may stand, however undefinitive, as a reason for hope. Other, typical moves toward universalism on scriptural grounds are even less able to take into account the central passages supporting the doctrine, and therefore more tenuous.

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Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends. By Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.), Charles A. Anderson (ed.), and Michael J. Sleasman (ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007; 288 pages, $24.00.##

What do the contents of the Safeway checkout line tell us about our culture's definition of that long-standing Socratic notion, "the good life"? What do Eminem's sometimes bombastic rap songs tell us about current notions of despair and redemption? How does one relate these definitions to the ones found in the Scriptures? More importantly, why should one bother?

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In *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, the first book in Baker's new "cultural exegesis" series, theologian and professor Kevin Vanhoozer and his co-editors, Charles A. Anderson and Michael J. Sleasman, set out to answer these and numerous other questions. They argue that theology is not just "faith seeking understanding" of God's special revelation in the Scriptures alone, it also includes the application of Scripture to all areas of life, including what is called "the everyday." Vanhoozer suggests that while theologians have excelled in the first, they have often lagged in the latter. But if theology does not engage the culture in which we live, the great danger is that Scripture itself, and the God it reveals, will come to be seen as irrelevant. While Vanhoozer does not mention this, the speed with which Western culture now changes seems to have increased the gap. *Everyday Theology*, therefore, can be understood as part of a growing effort to make sure theology keeps pace.

Reading Culture 'Theologically'

In the introductory chapter, Vanhoozer, currently teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, provides erudite and compelling reasons Christians should read culture "theologically." To read culture theologically, he says, is to observe and examine culture from the perspective of faith, bounded by the truths revealed in Scripture. The first reason we should do so, Vanhoozer argues, is that products of culture are imaginative embodiments, as opposed to propositional statements, of beliefs and values. Christians who want to communicate the story of our faith to those in our culture must be able to identify and understand the current beliefs and values as they are expressed in their most well-known forms—including popular music, movies, personal blogs, and business practices. We must, he writes, "become bilingual," understanding both Scripture and the culture in which we are called to speak.

Vanhoozer points out, however, that products of culture are not mere static expressions of beliefs and values. They shape how we view the world and how we act. He writes: "Prolonged exposure to cultural texts—and we are always exposed—produces various types of effects for good or ill. Culture is always cultivating our spirits in one way or another, sensitizing or desensitizing us, and enlivening or dulling our capacity to attend to various aspects of reality." Therefore, a second reason we should read culture theologically is to become more critical in our consumption of cultural products and our participation in cultural activities—asking ourselves which forms are beneficial and which are not.

The third reason Vanhoozer provides for reading culture theologically is rather different from his earlier two, which are not uncommon in Christian discussion. Culture, he argues, is a product of human beings created in the image of God, and thus expresses something of who God is and something of who we are. He is quick to qualify that such expressions are secondary to God's revelation in the Scriptures and should therefore be bounded by the biblical narrative of creation, fall, and redemption, but this understanding of culture clearly requires a different sort of engagement.

In discussing what he calls a "theologically thick" reading of culture, Vanhoozer describes what this sort of engagement might look like. It is an approach to culture that pays great attention to detail and avoids, whenever possible, a simplistic reduction to theological terms. At the same time, it faithfully attempts to describe "cultural discourse in terms of *biblical* discourse." Thus, he writes:

"Thanks to the Spirit's ministry of general revelation to the fractured image of God that we are as fallen human beings, part of what culture says is true, good, and beautiful; other parts, however, are false, bad, and ugly. It follows that we must hearken to cultural texts as possible vehicles for appropriating new insights into justice and truth while at the same time maintaining Scripture as our normative framework of interpretation."

In this third sense, then, to read popular culture theologically is to read it from the largest possible perspective—that of the biblical narrative—with a willingness to learn from our culture's insights, in addition to reading it for its shortcomings and falsehoods.

Argumentative Foundations

Vanhoozer's argument that one can and should "read" culture from a Christian theological perspective has two sources—one old and one new. The first, not stated explicitly, is the biblical mandate to be prepared to communicate the Gospel to those around us, particularly as expressed in the words and example of Paul to be "all things to all men." Vanhoozer's argument here is anything but new; it is the latest in a long line of Christian engagements with the culture, from Augustine's *City of God* to Jonathan Edwards' *The Nature of True Virtue* to John Polkinghorne's *Belief in God in an Age of Science*—attempts by followers of Christ to express the eternal truths of his Gospel in terms of the preoccupations of their times.

The second source of his argument, however, *is* new, and is indebted to the recent rise in academic interest in popular culture. This interest can be traced back to the rise of modern anthropology, modified by radical interpretations of Ferdinand de Saussure's definition of the linguistic sign, where "sign" is understood to refer to all symbols of human expression—not just linguistic ones—which, in turn, make up the constituent parts of a "world" or a "web of meaning." According to this understanding of "cultural signs," the meaning of each sign is determined with respect to its relationship with the other signs. The effect of this theory has been both positive and negative. On the one hand, it has led to the recognition that all forms of human expression are forms of meaning-making, and, as such, can be studied and scrutinized. On the other hand, it has led to the tacit argument that all products of culture—both so-called "popular" and "high" forms—are of equal value. Many proponents of this view would say there is no real difference in inherent value between, say, Snoop Dogg's "Gin and Juice" and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Bach's fugues.

Vanhoozer rightly refuses to distinguish between "popular culture" and "high culture" in precisely these terms, but he avoids the trap of claiming that all forms of cultural expression are of equal value. To the contrary, he proposes that by examining culture on its own terms—but from the standpoint of "faith seeking understanding"—Christians have a role to play in making distinctions between what in our culture is valuable and what is not. He sees this role as far deeper and more complex than the simplistic directives that sometimes pass for aesthetic or critical judgment in Christian circles. In this sense, Vanhoozer is proposing an important caveat to the traditional apologetic model, one that takes seriously the promise that all of God's creation—including those aspects of human culture that express something of who God is and who we are—is of inherent value.

Vanhoozer takes this promise seriously in *Everyday Theology* without, in turn, failing to distinguish (as some recent theologians have) between what is "noble" and "true" in our

culture, as Paul said to the Philippians, and what is little more than an expression of our depravity. His ability to do this is one example of the clear-headed balance that he maintains throughout the first part of the book.

Case Studies in Cultural Critique

The bulk of the book is comprised of case studies on how to interpret cultural texts and trends, written by former students of Vanhoozer. We cannot mention here all the book's insightful glosses on topics as varied as the music of Eminem, megachurch architecture, and what is called "transhumanism," but a few examples, cited pell-mell, should suffice.

In a chapter called "The High Price of Unity: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," David G. Thompson notes contemporary challenges to the Declaration of Human Rights and asks whether the biblical doctrine of humanity created in the image of God might provide a more comprehensive foundation, despite its theistic assumptions, for the notion of human rights than the secular one provided in the declaration. In "Swords, Sandals, and Saviors: Visions of Hope in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*," Michael J. Sleasman writes that the conflicting visions of hope in the film, *Gladiator*, "resonate with our own experiences of hope." He sees in the film an example of how a future hope can affect present action in a way that shows the "pie in the sky" criticism of Christian eschatology to be misplaced.

Although the individual chapters sometimes read too much like a textbook, the authors do a good job of putting Vanhoozer's methods into practice, pulling out numerous other insights—for example, the notion that the personal blog sometimes functions as a form of "confession without repentance," or that our culture's increasing uneasiness with death can be seen in the rising number of so-called "fantasy funerals."

In the liberal arts, pendulums of academic fashion sometimes swing in ways that have embarrassing consequences for ardent proponents of this or that new theoretical approach. What is at first perceived as a breakthrough is scrutinized over time, corrected, and adjusted. In some cases, however, an approach is rightly consigned to oblivion, which seems to be the fast approaching fate of "deconstruction." As one of deconstruction's heirs, "cultural studies" needs to be approached with both prudence and a good dose of common sense. In *Everyday Theology* Vanhoozer seems to have done exactly that, gleaning the best of what the discipline has to offer while at the same time grounding his analysis in the unchanging revelation of the Scriptures.

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THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM

THE APOSTLES' CREED (OLD ROMAN FORM)

I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary; crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; [and] the resurrection of the flesh.

THE NICÆNO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold to the catholic faith. Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate, he will assuredly perish eternally.

Now this is the catholic faith, that we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons, or dividing the substance. For the Father's person is one, the Son's another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory is equal, their majesty is co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is also the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreate, the Son uncreate, the Holy Spirit uncreate. The Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. Yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal; just as there are not three uncreates or three infinites, but one uncreate and one infinite. In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty; yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.

Thus the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God; and yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, the Holy Spirit Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but there is one Lord. Because just as we are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge each person separately to be both God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to speak of three Gods or Lords.

The Father is from none, not made nor created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are co-eternal with each other and co-equal. Thus in all things, as has been stated above, both trinity and unity and unity in trinity must be worshipped. So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the Trinity.

It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man.

He is God from the Father's substance, begotten before time; and He is man from His mother's substance, born in time. Perfect God, perfect man composed of a human soul and human flesh, equal to the Father in respect of His divinity, less than the Father in respect of His humanity.

Who, although He is God and man, is nevertheless not two, but one Christ. He is one, however, not by the transformation of His divinity into flesh, but by the taking up of His humanity into God; one certainly not by confusion of substance, but by oneness of person. For just as soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, from where He will come to judge the living and the dead; at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies, and will render an account of their deeds; and those who have done good will go to eternal life, those who have done evil to eternal fire.

This is the catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved. Amen

THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the

Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.