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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, creedal roots.

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January 15, 2012
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CONTENTS

PATRISTICAL READING

- The Stromata, II.4 1
Clement of Alexandria
-

ARTICLES

- Pantheists in Spite of Themselves? Pannenberg, Clayton, and Shults on Divine Infinity 3
William Lane Craig
- Disposition, Potentiality, and Beauty in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Defense of His Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin 25
Joseph Prud'homme & James Schelberg
- Διπλῆν ἑπαγγελίαν in Athanasius's Christology: A Methodology to Counter Kenotic Notions of the Incarnation 55
Theodore Zachariades
- A Tradition of Reductionism as a Matter of Fact: Alasdair Macintyre and Sam Harris 79
C. Shawn Stahlman
- Facets of Faith/Trust in Pauline Thought 101
J. Lyle Story
-

BOOK REVIEWS

- Peter J. Leithart. *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom.* 117
Mark W. Chavalas
- John Renard. *Islam and Christianity: Theological Themes in Comparative Perspective.* 119
Samuel J. Youngs
- Jeffrey J. Kripal. *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal.* 121
Gannon Murphy
- David W. Hall (ed.). *Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary.* 122
Myk Habets
- Eric G. Flett. *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture.* 126
Myk Habets

BOOK REVIEWS (con...)

Anthony N.S. Lane. <i>A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes.</i>	129
	<i>Myk Habets</i>
Declan O'Byrne. <i>Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey.</i>	130
	<i>Myk Habets</i>
David Alan Black (ed.). <i>Perspectives on the Ending of Mark.</i>	133
	<i>Jeffrey T. Riddle</i>
D. C. Parker. <i>Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible.</i>	138
	<i>Jeffrey T. Riddle</i>
Robert B. Stewart (ed.). <i>Bart D. Ehrman & Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue: The Reliability of the New Testament.</i>	141
	<i>Jeffrey T. Riddle</i>

THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF CHRISTIANITY147

PATRISTICAL READING

THE STROMATA, II.4

Clement of Alexandria*

Faith is something superior to knowledge, and its criterion.

... [W]e, who have heard by the Scriptures that self-determining choice and refusal have been given by the Lord to men, rest in the infallible criterion of faith, manifesting a willing spirit, since we have chosen life and believe God through His voice. And he who has believed the Word knows the matter to be true; for the Word is truth. But he who has disbelieved Him that speaks, has disbelieved God.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made of things which appear, says the apostle. By faith Abel offered to God a fuller sacrifice than Cain, by which he received testimony that he was righteous, God giving testimony to him respecting his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaks, and so forth, down to than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Faith having, therefore, justified these before the law, made them heirs of the divine promise. Why then should I review and adduce any further testimonies of faith from the history in our hands? For the time would fail me were I to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, David, and Samuel, and the prophets, and what follows. Hebrews 11:32 Now, inasmuch as there are four things in which the truth resides—Sensation, Understanding, Knowledge, Opinion—intellectual apprehension is first in the order of nature; but in our case, and in relation to ourselves, Sensation is first, and of Sensation and Understanding the essence of Knowledge is formed; and evidence is common to Understanding and Sensation. Well, Sensation is the ladder to Knowledge; while Faith, advancing over the pathway of the objects of sense, leaves Opinion behind, and speeds to things free of deception, and reposes in the truth.

Should one say that Knowledge is founded on demonstration by a process of reasoning, let him hear that first principles are incapable of demonstration; for they are known neither by art nor sagacity. For the latter is conversant about objects that are susceptible of change, while the former is practical solely, and not theoretical. Hence it is thought that the first cause of the universe can be apprehended by faith alone. For all knowledge is capable of being taught; and what is capable of being taught is founded on what is known before. But the first cause of the universe was not previously known to the Greeks; neither, accordingly, to Thales, who came to the conclusion that water was the first cause; nor to the other natural philosophers who succeeded him, since it was Anaxagoras who was the first who assigned to Mind the supremacy over material things. But not even he preserved the dignity suited to the efficient cause, describing as he did certain silly vortices, together with the inertia and even foolishness of Mind. Wherefore also the Word says, Call no man master on earth. Matthew 23:9 For knowledge is a state of mind that results from demonstration; but faith is a grace which from what is indemonstrable conducts to what is universal and simple, what is neither with matter, nor matter, nor under matter. But those who believe not, as to be expected,

* Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215) was head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. His extant works include: the *Protrepticus* (“Exhortation to the Greeks”), the *Paedagogus* (“Instructor”) and the *Stromata* (“Patchwork”).

drag all down from heaven, and the region of the invisible, to earth, absolutely grasping with their hands rocks and oaks, according to Plato. For, clinging to all such things, they asseverate that that alone exists which can be touched and handled, defining body and essence to be identical: disputing against themselves, they very piously defend the existence of certain intellectual and bodiless forms descending somewhere from above from the invisible world, vehemently maintaining that there is a true essence. Lo, I make new things, says the Word, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man. Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9 With a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, whatever can be seen and heard is to be apprehended, by the faith and understanding of the disciples of the Lord, who speak, hear, and act spiritually. For there is genuine coin, and other that is spurious; which no less deceives un-professionals, that it does not the money-changers; who know through having learned how to separate and distinguish what has a false stamp from what is genuine. So the money-changer only says to the unprofessional man that the coin is counterfeit. But the reason why, only the banker's apprentice, and he that is trained to this department, learns.

Now Aristotle says that the judgment which follows knowledge is in truth faith. Accordingly, faith is something superior to knowledge, and is its criterion. Conjecture, which is only a feeble supposition, counterfeits faith; as the flatterer counterfeits a friend, and the wolf the dog. And as the workman sees that by learning certain things he becomes an artificer, and the helmsman by being instructed in the art will be able to steer; he does not regard the mere wishing to become excellent and good enough, but he must learn it by the exercise of obedience. But to obey the Word, whom we call Instructor, is to believe Him, going against Him in nothing. For how can we take up a position of hostility to God? Knowledge, accordingly, is characterized by faith; and faith, by a kind of divine mutual and reciprocal correspondence, becomes characterized by knowledge.

Epicurus, too, who very greatly preferred pleasure to truth, supposes faith to be a preconception of the mind; and defines preconception to be a grasping at something evident, and at the clear understanding of the thing; and asserts that, without preconception, no one can either inquire, or doubt, or judge, or even argue. How can one, without a preconceived idea of what he is aiming after, learn about that which is the subject of his investigation? He, again, who has learned has already turned his preconception into comprehension. And if he who learns, learns not without a preconceived idea which takes in what is expressed, that man has ears to hear the truth. And happy is the man that speaks to the ears of those who hear; as happy certainly also is he who is a child of obedience. Now to hear is to understand. If, then, faith is nothing else than a preconception of the mind in regard to what is the subject of discourse, and obedience is so called, and understanding and persuasion; no one shall learn anything without faith, since no one [learns anything] without preconception. Consequently there is a more ample demonstration of the complete truth of what was spoken by the prophet, Unless you believe, neither will you understand. Paraphrasing this oracle, Heraclitus of Ephesus says, If a man hope not, he will not find that which is not hoped for, seeing it is inscrutable and inaccessible. Plato the philosopher, also, in *The Laws*, says, that he who would be blessed and happy, must be straight from the beginning a partaker of the truth, so as to live true for as long a period as possible; for he is a man of faith.

...

PANTHEISTS IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES? PANNENBERG, CLAYTON, AND SHULTS ON DIVINE INFINITY

William Lane Craig*

Christian theology has traditionally affirmed that God is infinite. But some contemporary theologians seem to think that this affirmation stands in tension with the Christian belief in the reality of a finite world distinct from God. These theologians exhibit an unsettling tendency toward monism, the view that all reality is one, namely, God, and, hence, toward pantheism. Although they may shrink from this conclusion and try to provide ways to avoid it, these escape routes may strike us as less than convincing, so that their rejection of pantheism represents merely a failure on their part to carry out their views to their logical conclusions.

The Monistic Argument

Although the roots of this tendency may be traced back to German idealism, its contemporary progenitor is Wolfhart Pannenberg, whose theology is deeply influenced by Hegel's metaphysics. Here, for example, is how the problematic comes to expression in Pannenberg:

In the concept of infinity freedom from limitation is not the primary point. Strictly, the infinite is not that which is without end but that which stands opposed to the finite, to what is defined by something else¹²⁶...the basic point in the concept of the Infinite is the antithesis to the finite as such. Hence the concept of the Infinite could become a description of the divine reality in distinction from everything finite...

¹²⁶ Cf. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, I, ¶56.2; and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, I, ¶ 1, ch. 2c, whose first simple definition is that the Infinite is the 'negation of the finite.' To be finite is to be in distinction from something and to be defined by the distinction. The relation of something to something else is an immanent definition of the something itself. From this fact Hegel derives his famous thesis that the Infinite is truly infinite only when it is not thought of merely as the opposite of the finite, for otherwise it would be seen as something in relation to something else and therefore as itself finite.¹

Now *prima facie* this definition of the concept of the infinite does not seem to make sense. Pannenberg appears to say that the basic concept of the infinite is *that which stands opposed to the finite*, where the finite is understood as *what is defined by something else*. So on this account, the infinite is defined relationally with respect to the finite, in terms of the relation *stands opposed to*. But then it follows that the infinite is finite, which is a contradiction.

Similarly, in the attendant footnote, we are told that the finite is *that which is in distinction from something and is defined by the distinction*. Now as the "negation of the finite," the infinite must lack at least one of these properties of the finite, that is to say, either the infinite is not distinct from anything or the infinite is not defined by the distinction. But we have just seen

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¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 1: 397. Bromiley's translation is rather free, and the sentence footnoted 126 is in the German a direct quotation from Schleiermacher.

that the infinite *is* defined by its distinction from the finite. The infinite is the opposite of the finite. It follows that the infinite must not, therefore, possess the first property of the finite, *being in distinction from something*. Therefore, the infinite and the finite cannot really be distinct; rather the infinite must be finite, which is a contradiction.

It might plausibly be thought that this apparent incoherence results largely from the English translator's glossing over some important distinctions. The word *bestimmen* (or *Bestimmung*) is used in at least two different senses in this passage.² It is first used in the semantic sense to mean "define," specifically to define a concept (*Begriff*). But, secondly, it is used in an ontic sense of "determine" or "render determinate." Concepts are defined; things are determined. Relational concepts are defined in terms of something else, but that does not imply that the thing falling under that concept is determined by the other thing. For example, being taller, being larger, or being older is each a relational concept; but that does not imply that a thing having such a property is determined in its height, size, or age by the thing to which it is compared.

Pannenberg follows Schleiermacher in defining the concept of the infinite as "that which stands opposed to the finite" (*das dem endlichen entgegengesetzte*). But neither Schleiermacher nor Pannenberg need be understood to define the concept of the finite as "that which is defined by something else" but rather as "that which is determined by something else" (*das durch anderes mitbestimmte*). Thus, the fact that the basic point (*Grundbestimmung*) in the concept of the Infinite is its antithesis to the finite (*Gegensatz zum Endlichen*) does not imply that the infinite is determined by something else.

Similarly in the attendant footnote, "the negation of the finite" is the definition of the concept of the infinite (*Bestimmung des Begriffs des Unendlichen*). But a nuanced translation reveals that to be finite is not "to be in distinction from something and to be defined by the distinction"; rather it is to be in distinction from something (else) and to be constituted in the determination of its being through the distinction from something else (*etwas im Unterschied zu anderem sein, also auch in der Bestimmtheit seines Seins durch den Unterschied zu anderem konstituiert zu sein*). Thus, one is not absurdly claiming that because the concept of the infinite is defined relationally the infinite is therefore finite; for the infinite itself need not be determined in its being by the finite.

The problem with pinning this confusion on the translator, however, is that Pannenberg himself seems to endorse the Hegelian conclusion that "Insofar as the relation of something to something else is conceived as 'an immanent determination of the thing itself,' this thing is determined as finite" (*Insofern das Verhältnis des Etwas zu Anderem als 'immanente Bestimmung des Etwas selbst' erfasst ist, ist dieses Etwas als Endliches bestimmt*)³ Pannenberg here appears to endorse the notion that because the *concept* of the infinite is relationally defined therefore the infinite itself is determined in its being. The problem is that is not at all clear nor has any argument been given to think that we should consider a thing's relation to something else to be an immanent determination of that thing; indeed, an "immanent determination" sounds

² It is also used in the elided words in the sense of an "individual" (what Bertrand Russell called a "term"), when Pannenberg speaks of "unlimited progress in a finite series," or, literally, "unlimited progress in the series of finite individuals (*Bestimmungen*)."

³ This is apparently the sentence translated by Bromiley as "The relation of something to something else is an immanent definition of the something itself."

like what we normally call an intrinsic property, in which case a relational property *cannot* be an immanent determination of the thing itself. It appears, then, that it is not the translator but Pannenberg himself who has conflated the two senses of *bestimmen*, and Bromiley has faithfully preserved this confusion of ideas in his translation.

From the conclusion that anything standing in relation to something else is determined in its being and therefore finite, Hegel is said to develop his famous thesis that the true infinite is not to be thought of as merely the opposite of the finite, lest it be seen as itself something over against something else and therefore as finite (*nicht nur als Gegensatz zum Endlichen gedacht wird, weil es sonst selber als Etwas gegenüber Anderem und somit als endlich vorgestellt wird*). As Pannenberg notes, in Hegel's thinking if the infinite were merely the opposite of the finite, it would stand in relation to something else and therefore be finite.⁴ Hegel sought to solve this perceived problem by distinguishing between the spurious infinite and the true infinite. He asserted, "The infinite as thus posited over against the finite, in a relation wherein they are as qualitatively distinct others, is to be called the *spurious infinite*. . . ."⁵ What Hegel called the "true infinite" he identified as the process of becoming which includes both the spurious infinite and the finite as moments.⁶ This is the ultimate reality. Because the finite and the infinite are ultimately One, there is no real opposition or distinction between them.

Now Pannenberg appears to endorse such reasoning. He says,

The Infinite that is merely a negation of the finite is not yet truly seen as the Infinite (as Hegel showed), for it is defined by delimitation from something else, i.e., the finite. Viewed in this way the Infinite is something in distinction from something else, and it is thus finite. The Infinite is truly infinite only when it transcends its own antithesis to the finite.⁷

Here Pannenberg seems to repeat the Hegelian argument and endorse Hegel's escape from the looming contradiction. The argument as Pannenberg explains it seems to be something like the following:

1. The finite is that which is defined by its distinction from something else.
2. The infinite is defined as that which is not finite.

Since (4) is a logical contradiction, either (1) or (2) must be false. Pannenberg, following Hegel, seems to reject (2) in favor of something like

- 2'. The infinite is that which includes the finite.

⁴ Hegel says: "This contradiction occurs as a direct result of the circumstance that the finite remains as a determinate being opposed to the infinite, so that there are two determinate-nesses; *there are two worlds, one infinite and one finite, and in their relationship the infinite is only the limit of the finite and is thus only a determinate infinite, an infinite which is itself finite*" (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller London: Allen & Unwin, 1969, Vol. 1, Bk. 1, Sect. 1, Chap. 2, Pt. B, Sub-pt. (c), par. 278).

⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 277.

⁶ *Ibid.*, par. 300.

⁷ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 400.

No contradiction follows from (1) and (2'), since the infinite is not defined in terms of its distinction from something else. Indeed, given (2'), there just is nothing distinct from the infinite. Such an infinite is, in Hegel's view, truly infinite.

Since the concept of the Infinite can be used as a description of divine reality, Pannenberg does not shy away from expressing his theological understanding of the God-world relation in the Hegelian language of Absolute Idealism:

The thought of the true Infinite means that the distinction between one thing and another cannot be applied unrestrictedly to God as the true Infinite. As the one who is not one among others, God must be absolute. As one, the Absolute is also all. Yet it is not all in one (pantheism) but transcends the difference of one and all.²³⁵ It is thus the One that also embraces all.

²³⁵ For Plotinus, then, the one is no part of the all... As such the absolute One is *apeiron*, not something. More precisely, as truly infinite, it is both something and not (merely) something.⁸

Pannenberg seems to be of two minds here. We are told that God cannot be distinct from any other thing and so is not one being among many. But we are left wondering as to the force of the qualifying word "unrestrictedly." God, the Absolute, must be all, we are told, because He is not one among others. This seems undeniably monistic and, hence, pantheistic. But then we are told that such a view is not pantheism, since pantheism affirms all in one. But if God is one and is not one among others and God is all, then there can be no being distinct from Him. If pantheism were not true, there would have to exist something distinct from God and apart from all, which is incoherent. If God is all and God is One, and these affirmations are understood as identity statements, the transitivity of identity entails that all is one. So all must be in one, since all and one are identical. If we understand these affirmations, not as identity statements, but as predications, then God has the property of being everything there is and the only thing there is. Thus, any and everything that exists must exist "in" God.

Pannenberg asserts that God transcends the difference of one and all. This cannot mean that God transcends the categories of one and all, since He has been affirmed to be one and all. Nor can it mean that there is no difference between one and all with respect to God, since that is precisely what pantheism affirms. The reference to Plotinus is unelucidating, since for Plotinus the One is beyond being and therefore cannot even be said to exist. That is why the One is "not something." If God does not exist, then nothing exists, since God is all. Moreover, God is affirmed to be "something," which entails that He is not beyond being. To say that He is not merely something is not to negate this affirmation but to heighten it: God is at least something and more. The "more" seems to be everything: God is all there is. Such would be a reasonable interpretation of Pannenberg's conclusion that God the Absolute embraces all.

So there is a strong tendency toward monism in Pannenberg's understanding of God as truly infinite. Certain followers of Pannenberg seem to have ventured even further in the direction of monism. Here, for example, is how the argument from infinity appears in Philip Clayton:

⁸ Ibid., 1: 443-4.

... it turns out to be impossible to conceive of God as fully infinite if he is limited by something outside of himself. The infinite may without contradiction include within itself things that are by nature finite, but it may not stand *outside of* the finite. For if something finite exists, and if the infinite is 'excluded' by the finite, then it is not truly infinite or without limit. To put it differently, there is simply no place for finite things to 'be' outside of that which is *absolutely unlimited*. Hence, an infinite God must encompass the finite world that he has created, making it in some sense 'within' himself. This is the conclusion that we call panentheism.⁹

Though obviously inspired by Pannenberg, Clayton's argument takes as its point of departure what Pannenberg denied: that freedom from limitation is the primary meaning of the concept of infinity.¹⁰ To be truly infinite is to be absolutely unlimited. Clayton elsewhere explains,

Being limited or bounded (*begrenzt*) intuitively implies the idea of something that is *un* bounded or infinite. To think a something is to think at the same time the border that makes it this something rather than another. Beginning with finite things, our mind stretches toward the indefinite, whether it is indefinite in number, size, or quality. But to (try to) think the totality of things that are bordered leads to the idea of something that is beyond all borders, which Hegel calls the 'truly infinite.'¹¹

This explanation helps us to understand why Clayton thinks that if the infinite exists "outside" the finite, then it is not truly infinite. For if the infinite is distinct from the finite, then there is a "border that makes it this something rather than another." There will be something which the finite is not and thus in this sense a limit to it. In this peculiar sense

⁹ Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), p. . Cf. his endorsement of the argument in "Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), p. 81.

¹⁰ Elsewhere Clayton distinguishes between what he calls the *intuition* of the infinite and the *concept* of the infinite. He thinks that the primitive intuition of the infinite is the idea of "something without limits" or "the unlimited." He claims that this intuitive idea is under-determinative for the concept of the infinite; indeed, one should really speak of a plurality of concepts, since the intuitive idea of the infinite can be variously conceptualized. He thinks that "each demands separate evaluation as one moves from one's starting intuitions to constructing metaphysical systems based on them" (Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000, p. 119; see pp. 118-120. It is odd, then, that in the quotation cited in the text he says it is "impossible to conceive of God as fully infinite if he is limited by something outside of himself." Since different conceptions of the infinite are possible, this assertion seems plainly false. Clayton's argument is based, rather, on his intuitive idea of the infinite, an intuition which reflection might reveal to be incoherent and therefore untenable as a concept of the infinite. It may turn out that what is impossible is to conceive of God as "truly infinite" as that expression is (mis)understood by Hegel and his *Anbänger*. Indeed, Clayton seems to admit this (*ibid.*, pp. 152-3; but cf. p. 168).

¹¹ Clayton, *Problem of God*, p. 125. Cf. Hegel's statement: "The infinite *is*; in this immediacy it is at the same time the *negation* of an other, of the finite. As thus in the form of simple being and at the same time as the *non-being* of an other, it has fallen back into the category of *something* as a determinate being in general—more precisely, into the category of something with a limit. . . ." (Hegel, *Logic*, par. 275. Cf. par. 278).

even a metaphysically necessary, self-existent being is limited in its existence by the presence of some metaphysically contingent, causally dependent being because it is *this* and not *that*. It follows that a truly infinite being must have no borders to its existence: nothing other than it can exist. Thus we are brought to the same conclusion toward which Pannenberg gravitated: there is nothing distinct from God. God is everything there is, which is pantheism.

Clayton's argument, then, is not infected by the confusion between "define" and "determine" that besets Pannenberg's version. Rather it appeals to the idea that the infinite must be absolutely unlimited. Clayton's reasoning can be formulated in terms of a conditional proof as follows:

1. God is infinite.
2. If something is infinite, it is absolutely unlimited.
3. If something is absolutely unlimited, it has no bounds.
4. If something is distinct from another thing, then that other thing bounds it.
5. If something is bounded by another thing, then it has bounds.
6. God is distinct from the world. (premiss for conditional proof)
7. Therefore, the world bounds God (4, 6)
8. Therefore, God has bounds. (5, 7)
9. Therefore, God is not absolutely unlimited. (3, 8)
10. Therefore, God is not infinite. (2, 9)
11. Therefore, if God is distinct from the world, God is not infinite. (6-10, Cond. Proof)
12. Therefore, God is not distinct from the world. (1, 11)

This argument can be generalized to show that God is not distinct from anything else.

Even a few evangelical theologians seem to have been mesmerized by this sort of reasoning. For example, in explaining Pannenberg's doctrine of God, LeRon Shults opines,

... it is important to stress the importance of the 'true infinite' concept. Here we have a distinction that transcends yet embraces the distinction between God and the world. This special distinction has been emphasized by many theologians over the centuries, but recently it has been radically thematized. Robert Sokolowski describes it in this way: '(God plus the world) is not greater than God alone.' . . . If the world and God together were 'more' than God alone, then we have something 'greater' than God,' namely, God and the world.¹²

This is not, in fact, Pannenberg's argument, though it is one rooted in the tradition of Absolute Idealism.¹³ Shults' argument presupposes the Anselmian notion of God as the

¹² F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 100-1.

¹³ Cf. Hegel's reflection that if we think of the infinite and the finite as existing without connection, then "The infinite, in that case, is *one of the two*; but as only one of the two it is itself finite, it is not the

greatest conceivable being and claims that if God and the world are distinct entities, then there is some entity greater than God, which is impossible. Shults elsewhere expands on the assumption that God and the world together constitute some greater reality:

Often we imagine 'all that is' as divided into two generic kinds: divine and non-divine. This way of construing the distinction between Creator and creation succeeds in protecting against pantheism, but it easily leads us into the opposite problem: conceptualizing the relation between Infinity and finitude (or between Eternity and time) in terms of a simple dualism in which God and the world are two parts of a broader whole.

. . . If one conceptualizes the God-world relation in terms of two kinds of being (infinite and finite) that together compose 'All,' then this All replaces God as the Absolute. Both God and world become parts of the 'Whole'...this way of speaking is not consistent with the idea of God as the unlimited and unconditioned, but marks 'God' off as that part of the Whole that is limited (and so conditioned) by the finite.¹⁴

In this last remark we see how Shults' argument links up with Clayton's (and in fact Shults at this point footnotes Clayton's argument cited above). In Shults' view if God were an entity distinct from the world, then He would be just a part of a greater reality comprised of God and the world and thus be limited by the world. Thus, one is led once again to deny that God and the world are distinct entities and, hence, to pantheistic monism.

We may formulate Shults' reasoning as follows:

1. God is the greatest conceivable being.
2. If God were an entity distinct from the world, then God and the world would be parts of a greater whole.
3. If God and the world were parts of a greater whole, then there would be something greater than God.
4. If there were something greater than God, then God would not be the greatest conceivable being.
5. Therefore, there is nothing greater than God. (1, 4)
6. Therefore, God and the world are not parts of a greater whole. (3, 5)
7. Therefore, God is not an entity distinct from the world. (2, 6)

Thus God, as the greatest conceivable being, a truly infinite being, must encompass all there is.

whole but only one side; it has its limit in what stands over against it; it is thus the finite *infinite*. There are present only two *finite*s" (Hegel, *Logic*, par. 288).

¹⁴ F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *Faces of Forgiveness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2003), pp. 161-4.

Escape from Monism

Now none of these three Christian theologians wants to be a pantheist, and so each tries to escape or reinterpret Hegelian monism so as to maintain Christian orthodoxy.

Pannenberg, despite his Hegelian proclivity towards monism, is clearly neither a pantheist nor a monist. Rather he reconstrues the antithesis of the infinite to the finite in such a way that they are reconcilable even as their distinctness is preserved. Simplifying, we may say that Pannenberg construes the antithesis between God and the universe as an almost literal sort of opposition, which is then overcome by some sort of relationship of God to the world which achieves reconciliation. In this reconciliation the distinctness of the *relata* is not dissolved. Pannenberg is fond of the word *aufgehoben* to characterize the opposition between God and the universe. The connotation is that the distinction at issue is not annulled but taken up to a higher level where the opposition is overcome even as the distinction is preserved. To give our own illustration, in marriage the antithesis of two persons is *aufgehoben*, as husband and wife come together in a deep unity even as their distinctness as persons is preserved. In the same way the opposition between infinite and finite, God and the world, is *aufgehoben* in that God is intimately related to the world in various ways even as the ontological distinctness between God and the world is preserved.

To see this worked out systematically, one should turn to Pannenberg's exposition of "The Infinity of God" in part 6 of the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*.¹⁵ There he expounds divine infinity in terms of God's attributes of holiness, eternity, omnipotence, and omnipresence. He takes the idea of holiness to be so closely linked to divine infinity that it is needed for its elucidation, while eternity, omnipotence, and omnipresence may be seen as "concrete manifestations" of God's infinity. Already it is noteworthy that God's existence is conspicuously absent from this analysis; there is no suggestion that God's existence is at odds with finite existence.

Pannenberg takes the basic point in the concept of the infinite to be the antithesis to the finite as such. As his exposition will bear out, we should place the emphasis here on the notion of the infinite as standing opposed to the finite. Pannenberg does not, in fact, think of the infinite as something that annuls or extinguishes the finite, for in order for the infinite to stand in opposition to the finite the distinction between the two must be real. If they were one, they could not stand opposed. "In this regard," says Pannenberg, "the concept of the Infinite links up especially with that of the holiness of God, for the basic meaning of holiness is separateness from everything profane."¹⁶ God's holiness threatens the profane world because of divine judgment; yet that same holiness goes beyond judgment to bring salvation. Pannenberg sees this motif of reconciliation overcoming opposition as the key to understanding divine infinity. He explains:

¹⁵ The notion of infinity plays a prominent role throughout his *Systematic Theology*. Read in isolation, some passages might be misleading. For example, when Pannenberg says that "finite objects are conditioned by their being carved out of the infinite and defined by it" (1: 140; cf. 165, 353, 356), this sounds monistic; but in fact Pannenberg is talking about our vague, pre-conceptual awareness of the infinite, which is then differentiated by rational reflection (see 1: 114).

¹⁶ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 397-8.

Thus the holiness of God both opposes the profane world and embraces it, bringing it into fellowship with the holy God. We see here a structural affinity between what the Bible says about the holiness of God and the concept of the true Infinite. The Infinite that is merely a negation of the finite is not yet truly seen as the Infinite (as Hegel showed), for it is defined by delimitation from something else, i.e., the finite. Viewed in this way the infinite is something in distinction from something else, and it is thus finite. The Infinite is truly infinite only when it transcends its own antithesis to the finite. In this sense the holiness of God is truly infinite, for it is opposed to the profane, yet it also enters the profane world, penetrates it, and makes it holy. In the renewed world that is the target of eschatological hope the difference between God and creature will remain, but that between the holy and the profane will be totally abolished (Zech. 14.20-21).¹⁷

Pannenberg sees the same structure in the work of the Holy Spirit, who, as God, is opposed to the profane world and yet who sanctifies creatures by giving them fellowship with God. What we see here is that when Pannenberg speaks of the infinite's transcending its own antithesis to the finite, he is speaking in purely relational terms. The ontological difference between God and creatures is not abolished, but God and creatures come to be related in a special way.

Pannenberg thus thinks that the problem posed by Hegel's monistic argument is met by emphasizing the relationality of God and the universe, which overcomes their opposition while preserving their distinctness. He says:

the abstract concept of the true Infinite...contains a paradox... It tells us that we have to think of the Infinite as negation, as the opposite of the finite, but also that it comprehends this antithesis in itself. But the abstract concept of the true Infinite does not show us how we can do this. The thought of the holiness of God and the understanding of the essence of God as Spirit bring us closer to a resolving of the contradiction. They express the fact that the transcendent God himself is characterized by a vital movement which causes him to invade what is different from himself and to give it a share in his own life. The biblical view of the divine Spirit in his creative and life-giving work also contains the thought that God gives existence to the finite as that which is different from himself, so that his holiness does not mean the abolition of the distinction between the finite and the infinite.¹⁸

Pannenberg sees the reconciliation of God and the world as the way in which the antithesis between finite and infinite can be overcome while preserving the difference or distinction between them.

His handling of eternity, omnipotence, and omnipresence is similar to his analysis of holiness. In each case, the antithesis to finite existence is overcome by postulating some relation between God and creatures. With respect to eternity, Pannenberg rejects the Platonic conception of an unqualified divine timelessness in favor of a doctrine of divine atemporality plus a relation to temporal things. Unfortunately Pannenberg does not explain how God can transcend time while sustaining relations with temporal beings or events—all

¹⁷ Ibid., 1: 399-400.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1: 400.

he offers is non-explanatory appeals to Trinitarian theology without any real account of how the reconciliation is to be achieved. But the relational synthesis is isomorphic with divine holiness:

The thought of eternity that is not simply opposed to time but positively related to it, embracing it in its totality, offers a paradigmatic illustration and actualization of the structure of the true Infinite which is not just opposed to the finite but also embraces the antithesis. On the other hand the idea of a timeless eternity that is merely opposed to time corresponds to the improper infinite which in its opposition to the finite is defined by it and thereby shows itself to be finite.¹⁹

Just as the eternal does not abolish or obliterate time but is positively related to it, so the infinite's embracing the finite should be understood, not as swallowing it up, but as standing in some positive relationship to it.

With respect to omnipresence, Pannenberg sees an antithesis between God's immensity and creatures seemingly isolated from God, an opposition which is overcome by God's immediate presence to all things. "As in the case of his eternity, then, there are combined in his omnipresence elements of both immanence and transcendence in keeping with the criterion of the true Infinite."²⁰ Again, Pannenberg seeks to explicate this transcendence and immanence of God in terms of Trinitarian theology, appealing (without, it must again be said, any account) to the consubstantiality and perichoresis of the three persons of the Godhead in order to explain the presence of the transcendent Father to believers through the Son and Spirit. The point to be emphasized is that once again we are dealing with purely relational concerns in overcoming the opposition of the infinite and the finite. "The trinitarian life of God in his economy of salvation proves to be the true infinity of his omnipresence."²¹

Finally, with respect to omnipotence, that God is omnipotent means, according to Pannenberg, that God's power is as unlimited as his omnipresence and eternity. As such it stands opposed to creatures. But that cannot be the whole story, if omnipotence is a manifestation of God's true infinity.

Omnipotence rules absolutely, and what is ruled by it is at the mercy of its whim. This one-sided view of omnipotence which sets that which rules in opposition to that which is ruled misses the true concept of omnipotence...As Creator, God wills the existence of his creatures. Hence, his omnipotence cannot be totally opposed to them if he is to be identical with himself in his acts and to show himself therein to be the one God.²²

The omnipotent God therefore allows creatures to exist which have a measure of autonomy: "they can achieve an independent existence which is distinct from God and yet stay related to the origin of their life."²³ Once again we see that the overcoming of the alleged antithesis

¹⁹ Ibid., 1: 408.

²⁰ Ibid., 1: 412.

²¹ Ibid., 1: 415.

²² Ibid., 1: 416.

²³ Ibid., 1: 421.

between infinite and finite is accomplished relationally, in such a way that the distinction of each is preserved.

God's holiness, eternity, omnipresence, and omnipotence are the concrete ways in which God is infinite. None of them, on Pannenberg's view, abolishes the ontological distinction between creature and Creator. So when Pannenberg comes to discuss the unity of God and says that "The thought of the true Infinite means that the distinction between one thing and another cannot be applied unrestrictedly to God as the true Infinite,"²⁴ the force of the word "unrestrictedly" is that while God is distinct from other things He must also stand in relation to them. When Pannenberg says that God "transcends the difference between one and all" and is "the One that also embraces all," he is speaking loosely of the various relationships in which God as concretely infinite stands to His creatures, affirmatively embracing them just as a husband embraces his wife.

So God's unity is not a matter of ontological unity with the world but God's being united to the world in relationship.

By the unity of reconciliation by love which embraces the world and bridges the gulf between God and the world, the unity of God himself is realized in relation to the world... By the love which manifests itself in his revelatory action God's unity is constituted the unity of the true Infinite which transcends the antithesis to what is distinct from it.²⁵

Here the infinite's transcending the antithesis to distinct entities is accomplished by love, which bridges the gulf between God and the world. The ontological distinctness between God and the world is not annulled, but affirmed, on pain of reducing God's love of the world to self-love. Notice how Pannenberg affirms with respect to God's infinite attributes the ontological distinctness of God and the universe:

Only the doctrine of the Trinity permits us so to unite God's *transcendence* as Father and his *immanence* in and with his creatures through Son and Spirit that the *permanent distinction* between God and creature is upheld. The same holds good for an understanding of God's *omnipotence*. The power of God over his creation as the transcendent Father finds completion only through the work of the Son and Spirit because only thus is it freed from the one-sided antithesis of the one who determines and that which is determined... The same holds good also for an understanding of God's *eternity*. The incarnation of the Son sets aside the antithesis of eternity and time as the present of the Father... is present to us through the Son... the removal of the antithesis of eternity and time in the economy of God's saving action according to the wisdom of his love is the reconciliation of the antithesis between Creator and creature.²⁶

The overcoming of the perceived antithesis between the infinite God and the finite world is thus achieved, not by blurring the distinction between them, but by seeing them as existing in a loving relationship. Pannenberg sums up:

²⁴ Ibid., 1: 443.

²⁵ Ibid., 1: 446.

²⁶ Ibid., 1: 445-6 (my emphases).

The same holds good finally for an understanding of the basic statement of God's infinity. The thought of the true Infinite, which demands that we do not think of the infinite and the finite as a mere antithesis but also think of the unity that transcends the antithesis, poses first a mere challenge, an intellectual task which seems at first glance to involve a paradox. In the abstractly logical form of the question there appears to be no way of showing how we can combine the unity of the infinite and the finite in a single thought without expunging the difference between them...

...divine love in its trinitarian concreteness...embraces the tension of the infinite and the finite without setting aside their distinction. It is the unity of God with his creature which is grounded in the fact that the divine love eternally affirms the creature in its distinctiveness and thus sets aside its *separation* from God but not its *difference* from Him.²⁷

That last phrase encapsulates Pannenberg's solution to the problem of the infinite and finite: God's love overcomes the world's estrangement from Him while affirming its ontological distinctness.

Pannenberg, then, eschews both pantheism and monism. All this Hegelian talk about the antithesis of the infinite to the finite, the infinite's embracing the finite, God's not being unrestrictedly distinct from other things, and so on, is just fancy window dressing for the traditional doctrine of creation, which affirms God's distinctness from the universe and His relatedness to it.

But very little reflection is needed to realize that Pannenberg has greatly underestimated the force of the Hegelian argument. His affirmations of God's being related to the world while remaining distinct from it display Pannenberg's orthodoxy (despite his use of rather unorthodox language), but they do nothing to refute the argument for monism. Pannenberg, it will be recalled, seeks to avoid the contradiction that the infinite is finite by rejecting

2. The infinite is defined as that which is not finite

in favor of

2'. The infinite is that which includes the finite.

But (2') appears to be monistic. In order to avoid that conclusion Pannenberg interprets words like "includes" (e.g., "embraces," "transcends the antithesis to," "removes the antithesis between," and so on) to have the force "is positively related to." The perceived antithesis of God to the world is a sort of antagonism which is removed by God's being related to the world in affirming ways. The ontological distinctness between God and the world is actually presupposed by, rather than undermined by, such relatedness. But if this is all that is meant by God's (or the truly infinite's) inclusion of the world (or the finite), then (2') is just impotent to resolve the original contradiction. For Pannenberg is still thinking of God or the infinite as something that is distinct from the world or the finite. So what he means by (2') may be more accurately expressed as

2". The (truly) infinite is that which is distinct from the finite but positively related to it.

²⁷ Ibid., 1: 446 (my emphasis).

But in that case the infinite is still being defined in terms of its distinction from something else and therefore, according to premiss (1) of his argument, is still finite. (In one sense, this whole line of reasoning is sloppy and confused, since, as we have said, *words* or *concepts* are defined, not *things*, but to the extent that we accept for the sake of argument the original premisses, it remains the case that the infinite is “defined” by its distinction from the finite.²⁸) One cannot avoid the infinite’s being relationally defined by merely piling on more relations, like *being temporally related to*, *being present to*, and so on, in line with the concrete ways in which God is supposed to be truly infinite. If we let “R” stand for any of the special relations in which the infinite God is said to stand to the finite world, then on Pannenberg’s view, God is infinite = *def.* God R the world. But then God’s infinity is defined in terms of something else, that to which He stands in the relation R. So it follows from premiss (1) of the argument that God is finite. Therefore, Pannenberg has not avoided the contradiction that impelled Hegel to a monistic understanding of (2’) in terms of ontological inclusion.

It is hard to understand how Pannenberg could have thought that by positing additional, positive relations of God to the world, he had thereby overcome Hegel’s contradiction. It seems that he took the antithesis involved to be an almost literal sort of opposition or antagonism which could then be overcome by positing some positive relations. But the antithesis involved here is of a conceptual and ontological sort: the infinite is defined as the not-finite and so an infinite being is one that is distinct from every finite being. Postulating further relations between them has no effect on this fundamental antithesis.

Clayton also tries to avoid pantheism. He proposes that we adopt panentheism instead as a way of affirming God’s true infinity. Such nomenclature is misleading, however, for panentheism is typically taken to be the view that the world is partially constitutive of the divine being, that is to say, the world is a proper part of God. But Clayton, despite some incautious statements that “we are ‘composed’ out of him who is Being itself,”²⁹ explicitly affirms that the world is ontologically distinct from God, having been created *ex nihilo* at a point in the finite past and subsequently conserved in being by God.³⁰ What, then, does Clayton mean when he calls his view “panentheistic”? He means that the universe is literally located in God.³¹ At first blush this is reminiscent of Newton’s view of divine immensity and

²⁸ Perhaps we could formulate the argument more accurately as follows: for any being *x*,

1. *x* is finite = *def.* *x* is distinct from something else.

2. *x* is infinite = *def.* *x* is not finite.

3. God is infinite.

4. Therefore, God is not finite.

5. Therefore, God is not distinct from anything else.

Pannenberg would avoid the conclusion by replacing (2) with

2’. *x* is infinite = *def.* *x* is not finite, but *x* is positively related to the finite.

But (2’) does nothing to avert the problem. For from (2’) and (3) it follows that

6. God is not finite, but He is positively related to the finite,

from which it follows logically (by Simplification) that

4. Therefore, God is not finite,

and the conclusion then follows as before.

²⁹ Clayton, *God and contemporary Science*, p. 47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1, 157-8, 260-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90.

absolute space. According to Newton infinite space is the physical by-product of God's omnipresence, and objects moving through space are actually moving through God, who is present throughout space.

But how can any such Newtonian view be compatible with Clayton's affirmations of *creatio ex nihilo* and his recognition that standard Big Bang cosmogony involves an absolute origin not just of matter and energy, but of physical space and time themselves at the initial cosmological singularity? Clayton's answer is that the divine space "transcends and encompasses physical space."³² By this assertion Clayton seems to mean that God exists in an embedding hyper-space in which our four-dimensional space-time manifold exists. Moreover, Clayton affirms repeatedly that God literally existed temporally prior to the Big Bang singularity, at which physical time began.³³ So there must be an embedding dimension of hyper-time as well. Clayton's view, then, is that God exists in a hyper-space-time in which our four-dimensional universe is located, a view very close to the thesis of God's "extra-dimensionality" popularized by the Christian apologist Hugh Ross. God is thus ontologically distinct from the world though the world exists in God.

Such a novel view of God's relation to the world is, however, once again simply irrelevant to the Hegelian argument for monism as Clayton formulated it. Recall that according to premiss (2) of Clayton's argument, anything that is infinite is absolutely unlimited. In premiss (3), being absolutely unlimited is explicated in terms of having no bounds. Clayton takes the notion of having bounds very radically: a bound or border is that which "makes a thing this something rather than another."³⁴ Even bare identity conditions for an entity thus constitute bounds for that entity. So premiss (4) tells us that if anything is distinct from another thing, that other thing bounds it, and premiss (5) asserts the obvious, that if something is bounded by another thing, then it has bounds. Now since Clayton emphatically affirms that God and the world are not identical, but are ontologically distinct, it follows immediately that God is not infinite, since He is bounded by the world. Even if the world exists in God, the world remains as distinct from God as a bacterium in the stomach of a cow is distinct from that cow. Just as the cow is not a bacterium and so has a boundary to its existence set by that bacterium (and vice versa as well), so God is not the world and so has a boundary to His existence. It follows then that God is not absolutely unlimited (He is not the world) and therefore, according to the argument, is finite.

Again, it is bewildering that Clayton could have thought that by embedding the universe spatio-temporally in God he had done anything to remove the boundaries to God's existence. He seems to have been misled by his own naive language of the impossibility of the infinite's existing "outside of" the finite. He proposes to solve the problem by embedding the world "within" God.³⁵ This breezy solution completely fails to appreciate that the exteriority with which one is grappling is not spatial but ontological. Any being that is distinct from another is bounded by that other on this analysis, regardless of where they happen to be spatio-temporally located. So even if God has the world inside of Him, He is

³² Ibid., p. 89; cf. p. 90.

³³ Ibid., pp. 95, 157-8, 190.

³⁴ Clayton, *Problem of God*, p. 125.

³⁵ Ironically, on Clayton's view the infinite God still exists outside of the world even though the world does not exist outside of God. So the infinite remains "outside of" the finite on his view.

bounded by the world in that He and the world are two different things. Being thus limited, God, on Clayton's proposal, remains finite.

Finally, LeRon Shults thinks to avoid monism by emphasizing God's relationality. He says:

After the (re)turn to relationality, the metaphysics of substance that forced the choice between pantheism (one substance) and dualism (two substances) was severely challenged. If the divine nature is truly Infinite, so that God embraces while transcending the distinction between infinite and finite, then finite creaturely sharing in this nature does not have to mean that the finite becomes (substantially) infinite, nor that the finite is a constitutive 'part' of the infinite, nor that God's nature is one (infinite) substance defined over against other (finite) substances.³⁶

Now despite his opening sentence, Shults does not, it seems, really mean to abandon a metaphysics of substance in favor of pure relationality. Such a metaphysics would appear absurd, since relations obtain between substances. Moreover, Shults goes on to speak approvingly of God's having a nature and later of things existing in relation to God. In any case, premiss (1) of Shults' argument, that God is the greatest conceivable being, itself affirms that God is a substance, a being, so that if this is denied, one cannot reach the conclusion (7), which, on this interpretation, Shults means to affirm, namely, that God is not an entity. So Shults does not mean to assert that there literally are no things. He errs in thinking that Christian theism affirms dualism, for in this context that would be to assert that there are only two substances, two things, in existence. Christian theism is committed to a plurality of substances. Moreover, Christian theism affirms that those substances, including God, stand in a wide variety of relations. So what does Shults mean by the (re)turn to relationality? He explains:

I suggest a terminological distinction between existing, participating, and sharing in the divine nature. Romans 11.36 tells us that *all things* are from, through, and to God. This means that to be creaturely is to *exist* in their dynamic movement in relation to God... Human persons *participate* in a way that is qualitatively different than the experience of other creatures; self-conscious creatures experience a personal knowing, acting, and being as *becoming*... I normally reserve the term *sharing* for the intensification of the religious relation to God, which Christians experience as the indwelling and transforming presence of the Spirit...³⁷

This exposition is altogether innocuous and unremarkable. But is it also impotent to turn back the force of the monistic argument endorsed by Shults. According to premiss (2) of that argument, if God were a distinct entity from the world, then God and the world would be parts of a greater whole. Shults could avoid this conclusion by holding that there is no such entity, no such substance, as God. But that would be to affirm that there is no God, which Shults does not want to seem to do. Rather he wants to say that creatures, while distinct from God, share in the divine nature. But that sharing relation is then explicated in terms of an intensification of one's religious relation to God in Christian experience. As we saw with Pannenberg, the positing of such a relation does absolutely nothing to defeat any of

³⁶ Shults and Sandage, *Faces of Forgiveness*, p. 166.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

the premises of the argument for monism which Shults endorsed. On Shults' view God's nature may not be one substance "over against" other substances in the sense of antagonism or opposition, but it certainly is in the sense of ontological distinctness. So long as God is an entity (which Shults seems to affirm), it follows from Shults' argument that God cannot be distinct from but related to the world, as Shults wants to affirm, for then there would be something greater than God, namely, the entity comprising God and the world. So the world and God must be the same entity, which is to affirm pantheism.

In sum, these three Christian theologians have not been able to frame successful defeaters for the monistic and pantheistic conclusions of the Hegelian-style arguments they have endorsed. So long as they continue to endorse the premises of those arguments, they will be stuck with pantheism in spite of themselves.

Failure of the Monistic Argument

Fortunately, the Hegelian-style arguments offered by our three theologians are not at all compelling. In the first place, the premises of those arguments presuppose a concept of the infinite which is deeply flawed and even incoherent. About fifty years after Hegel's death, revolutionary developments in the concept of the infinite were taking place in mathematics, spearheaded by his compatriot Georg Cantor. Cantor also claimed on behalf of his concept of the infinite that it was the "true infinite," in contrast to the "improper infinite" which had prevailed up until that time.³⁸ Cantor's positive definition of the infinite soon swept through mathematics and lies at the foundations of modern set theory (which many mathematicians believe to be foundational for all of mathematics) and transfinite arithmetic.

Cantor differentiated between a potential infinite and an actual infinite. Up until his time the concept of infinity was purely a limit concept. Infinity serves as the ideal terminus of unceasing processes which ever more closely approach but never arrive at infinity. For example, the number of segments into which some distance could be divided exceeds any natural number; as the dividing goes on the number of segments approaches infinity. Aristotle had maintained that the infinite thus exists merely potentially but never actually. By contrast Cantor enunciated the concept of a quantity that is actually infinite. On Cantor's analysis, a collection is actually infinite if and only if it has a proper part which has the same number of elements or members as the whole collection. A proper part of a collection is a part which is not co-extensive with the whole collection; that is to say, there are members of the whole collection which are not members of the part. Two collections have the same number of members if and only if their members can be paired in a one-to-one correspondence. So, for example, on this analysis, the natural number series 0, 1, 2, 3,... is actually infinite, having a proper part (say, the odd numbers) which is numerically equivalent to the whole series.

0, 1, 2, 3,...

↕, ↕, ↕, ↕,...

1, 3, 5, 7,...

³⁸ Georg Cantor, *Contributions to the Founding of the Theory of Transfinite Numbers*, trans. with an Introduction by Philip E. B. Jourdain (New York: Dover Publications, 1915).

On the other hand, a collection is finite if the number of members of the collection is some natural number n .

Cantor's definitions completely subvert the Hegelian argument. For it is not true, as Pannenberg's version of Hegel's argument affirms, that:

2. The infinite is defined as that which is not finite.

Cantor gave positive content to the concept of the infinite; it was not defined merely as the negation of the finite. Even apart from Cantor's analysis, the ineptness of (2) should have been evident anyway. The "not-finite" is no more synonymous with "infinite" than the "not-black" is synonymous with "white". The not-finite encompasses not only the actual infinite but also the potential infinite, as well as anything to which the category of quantity is inapplicable. For example, in the first case, the size of a geometrically closed but ever-expanding universe is potentially infinite and so cannot be equated with any finite number or any actually infinite number. As for the second case, while it is true that "The color blue is not finite" because the category of quantity is simply inapplicable, that is not to affirm the absurdity, "The color blue is infinite." Thus, the definition offered in (2) is clearly defective.

Neither, on Cantor's account, is it true, as Pannenberg suggests, that:

2'. The infinite is that which includes the finite.

For (2'), on Cantor's definitions, is clearly false, for one can have infinite collections which have no members in common. So, for example, -2 is not included in the natural number series, despite the fact that that series is infinite.

Cantor's definitions also make it clear that Clayton's premiss:

2. If something is infinite, it is absolutely unlimited.

is false. The collection of natural numbers have a lower bound 0 but is nonetheless infinite. The series of fractions between 1 and 2 has both an upper and lower bound, namely, $2/1$ and $1/1$, but is for all that infinite. Thus, given Cantor's definitions, the crucial premises in the monistic arguments are false.

Of course, Pannenberg and Clayton will respond that the true infinite is not a mathematical but a metaphysical concept. Pannenberg differentiates between Hegel's "qualitative definition" of the infinite and the "quantitative mathematical definition."³⁹ He sees the former as more basic than the latter, for

freedom from limitation is a consequence of negation of the finite, and this freedom can have the form of unlimited progress in a finite series. The infinite series—including the indefinite sequence of finite magnitudes in space and time—actualizes the antithesis of the infinite and the finite only in a one-sided way, namely, by an unrestricted addition of finite steps.⁴⁰

This explanation makes it evident that Pannenberg is still thinking of the mathematical infinite in pre-Cantorian terms as a merely potential infinite. As we have seen, the concept of

³⁹ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 397.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the actual infinite has nothing to do with the absence of limits. This is the case even if, historically speaking, the idea of the actual infinite evolved out of reflection on the potential infinite and freedom from limits. The definition of the concept of actual infinity makes no reference to absence of limits and so is independent of that notion.

Now suppose we do distinguish between the mathematical (or quantitative) and the metaphysical (or qualitative) infinite (as, in fact, I think we should).⁴¹ Two questions then present themselves. First, why think that the metaphysical infinite is privileged over the mathematical infinite as the concept of the “true infinite”? Why not think that the true infinite is the mathematical concept, and the qualitative idea just an analogical notion? Indeed, given the rigor and fecundity of Cantor’s analysis in contrast to the imprecise, subjective, and poorly understood metaphysical concept, do we not have good grounds for elevating the mathematical concept to the status of the true infinite? At least there is no reason to make it play second fiddle to its metaphysical cousin.

Our theologians might plausibly reply that they are not privileging the metaphysical over the mathematical infinite so much as maintaining that mathematical or quantitative concepts are simply not at issue here, since one’s concern is with God’s infinity, and divine infinity is not a quantitative notion, having nothing to do with collections of definite and discrete members.

This reply seems quite correct. But then we come to the second question occasioned by the distinction between the mathematical and metaphysical infinite, namely, why think that the Hegelian concept of the metaphysical infinite is correct? Why think that Hegel has correctly understood the notion of the metaphysically infinite? Here we come to the heart of the issue, which is most clearly expressed in Clayton’s

2. If something is (metaphysically) infinite, it is absolutely unlimited.

Why think that (2) is true? The intuition behind (2) consistently seems to be that if something has any limits at all, then it is finite. Moreover, limits are understood here very loosely, so that even the existence of another entity constitutes a limit to a thing’s existence. Although he denies that freedom from limitation is the primary concept of the infinite, such an understanding seems to be presupposed by Pannenberg’s

1. The finite is that which is defined by its distinction from something else.

If something is distinct from something else, then that other thing constitutes a limit to its existence, revealing it to be finite. Similarly, one will recall, Shults thinks that conceiving of God and the world as substantially distinct is inconsistent with speaking of God as unlimited, but marks God off as that part of the whole which is limited by the finite.

So on this view, if it were the case that only God and the moon existed as distinct entities, then even if God is necessary, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, omnipresent, and so on with the rest of His superlative attributes, God is nonetheless finite because He is not the moon. That is because the moon is a boundary to His existence and so limits God to being *this* thing but not *that* thing.

⁴¹ On this distinction see the fine treatment by A. W. Moore, *The Infinite, The Problems of Philosophy: Their Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Now this understanding of “limit” has peculiar consequences. For, perversely, had God in this case not created the moon, then only God would exist and thus nothing would limit God’s existence, so that God would be infinite! In that case God would be all there is. But if He exercises His omnipotence and creates the moon *ex nihilo*, then He is not all there is. Even though God has undergone no intrinsic change whatsoever in His attributes, He is now a finite rather than an infinite being simply in virtue of the moon’s existence.

The above thought experiment suggests that our neo-Hegelians have confused “infinite” with “all.” If God and the moon exist, then God is not all there is, but it does not follow that He is not infinite. God is intrinsically the same with respect to His attributes whether the moon exists or not. So if we take Clayton’s (2) to mean

2". If something is (metaphysically) infinite, it is all there is.

then this premiss is plausibly false. The infinite need not be absolutely unlimited in this sense.

Here we connect with Shults’ argument, which makes no explicit appeal to the metaphysical infinite but which also conflates “infinite” with “all.” We may agree with Shults that if God and the world were parts of a greater whole, there would be something greater than God. But why accept his,

2. If God were an entity distinct from the world, then God and the world would be parts of a greater whole.

This premiss assumes a philosophical analysis of parthood which most philosophers would find incredible. Shults seems to think that for any two entities, their mereological sum constitutes a thing of which they are parts. But this seems fantastic. Do my left hand and the lamp on a desk constitute an object of which they are parts? The answer seems obviously, no. Ironically, Shults turns out to be a more radical substance metaphysician than those he criticizes, for he reifies such arbitrary sums into bona fide substances. He must take these sums to be real substances, otherwise his claim that God would no longer be the greatest conceivable being would be unjustified. So, if Shults is to defend (2), he needs to give some powerful argument for thinking that arbitrary mereological sums constitute objects or else show why in God’s special case the mereological sum of, say, God and the moon is an object of which God is a part. We all agree that if God and the moon exist, then God is not all there is; but it does not follow that there exists therefore some object of which God is a part.

To return, then, to Clayton’s (2), not only is there no good reason to accept (2) as true, but we have, moreover, good reason to reject it. For the concept of an absolutely unlimited being is incoherent. According to Clayton, a border or limit is that which makes a thing *this* thing rather than another. But that entails that even if God existed alone, in utter solitude, so that He was all there is, He would still be a limited being. For He would still have specific properties that make Him what He is rather than something else. God would still have limits to His being in that He is not, say, a mouse or the moon. Indeed, if God’s attributes are essential to Him, then God is necessarily limited in His existence to what He is. Hence, for a being to be absolutely unlimited, there cannot be any predicates at all that are applicable to it.

But then incoherence immediately follows. For if nothing can be truly predicated of some being, then the predicate “being absolutely unlimited” cannot be truly predicated of that being. But then the statement

2. If something is (metaphysically) infinite, it is absolutely unlimited.

is false or truth valueless, which contradicts the hypothesis. To put the same point another way: if a being is absolutely unlimited, then it is *not* limited. Hence, there is a boundary to its existence; there is something it is not: it is not a limited being. An absolutely unlimited being *cannot* have any predicates—which is to posit a limit to its being.⁴²

Therefore, we have compelling reasons to reject Clayton’s (2), for the notion of an absolutely unlimited being, in the curious sense in which “limit” is being employed, is self-referentially incoherent. Hence, the understanding of the metaphysically infinite presupposed by our neo-Hegelian theologians must be rejected.

So what, then, do we mean when we affirm with Clayton that:

1. God is infinite.

Here, Pannenberg’s insight that God’s infinity has concrete manifestations provides the key. There really is no separate divine attribute denoted by “infinity.” Rather “infinity” serves as an umbrella-term for capturing all those properties which serve to make God the greatest conceivable being. In saying that God is infinite, we mean that God is necessary, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, eternal, omnipresent, and so forth. Were we to abstract these properties from the concept of God, there would not remain some further, undefined property *infinity*. Rather God’s infinity is constituted precisely by these great-making properties. All of these properties have been given careful definitions by Christian philosophers in the analytic tradition, definitions which do not surreptitiously reintroduce the concept of infinity; but unfortunately the Christian theologians whom we have discussed in this essay evince little familiarity with this literature.⁴³ This is greatly to be regretted, for these discussions in analytic philosophy of religion could have helped them to steer clear of the conceptual *Sackgasse* into which their reliance on Hegelian idealism has led them.

⁴² Cf. the critique of Avaita Vendanta Hinduism by Robin Collins, “Eastern Religions,” in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 188-92. The monism implied by Hegel’s argument is not one according to which the world is a part of God, in the way that one’s hand is a part of one’s body. For the whole and the part are on such an account still distinct; the body is not a hand. Hence, Hegel’s own solution to the contradiction between the infinite and finite was inadequate, for so long as the distinction between God and the world is preserved in their higher unity, they still limit one another. As Collins points out, views which deny the reality of distinctions between beings amount, not to pantheism but to illusionism. The Absolute is the only reality and the world of objects distinct from it is illusory (*maya*). Thus, what our neo-Hegelian Christian theologians are driving toward is a monism akin to that of Taoism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Vendanta Hinduism, on which see Stuart C. Hackett, *Oriental Philosophy: A Westerner’s Guide to Eastern Thought* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). Cf. Alvin Plantinga’s critique of John Hick’s notion of the ineffable Real in Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 49-55.

⁴³ For discussion and literature see *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide*, ed. William Lane Craig (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), Part III: “The Coherence of Theism.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, the idea that God is metaphysically infinite should not incline us towards monism. Neither should we think that the fact that a real world exists and God is not all there is implies that God is finite. If there were a tension between God's infinity and the reality of the world, the mere postulation of relations of God to the world while preserving their ontological distinctness would avail for nothing. Nothing short of monistic illusionism would avert the contradiction. But there is no reason to think that God's metaphysical infinity entails being absolutely unlimited in this radical sense. Indeed, such a notion is self-referentially incoherent. Rather God's metaphysical infinity should be understood in terms of His superlative attributes which make Him a maximally great being.

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DISPOSITION, POTENTIALITY, AND BEAUTY IN THE THEOLOGY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS: A DEFENSE OF HIS GREAT CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

Joseph Prud'homme & James Schelberg*

Jonathan Edwards presents students of theology with a different understanding of the fall than is expressed in much of Christian thought, a view that accounts for original sin, not merely by a reiteration of Adam's apostasy, or by reflection on the abhorrent defects of human nature, but by a metaphysics of identity, process, and possibility. In Edwards's work not only is the traditional conception of total human depravity resulting from Adam's fall affirmed, but also God's punishment of individuals following Adam is justified on the basis that all bear a genuine responsibility for Adam's transgression. Further, the rejection of original sin is depicted not only as unscriptural, but as enervating to the moral conscience of mankind. We will argue that the foundation for these conclusions is provided by Edwards's development of a distinctive metaphysics of disposition and potentiality.

Edwards develops his ideas on the fall in a piece entitled *Original Sin*, published posthumously in 1758. In this work Edwards articulates theological arguments at great length and in great detail, but he often does so without explaining the complex metaphysical foundation on which these arguments are built. On the few occasions in which Edwards feels forced to explain his metaphysical positions, he typically does so either briefly or metaphorically, but such abbreviated accounts and metaphors do not facilitate a complete understanding of the deep metaphysical underpinnings of his theology. Edwards's thought on the fall is therefore notoriously difficult, a view expressed early in his career, and even by his own contemporaries. Mark Noll reports that for a full century after the publication of *Original Sin*, American Presbyterians, "the most articulate theologians" in America at the time—and ones not predisposed to reject Edwards's thought out of hand—still "could never quite understand" his arguments.¹ We may assume that this is partially due to Edwards's minimalist explanations of his underlying metaphysics.

Several recent scholars, however, have made significant progress in elucidating the subtleties, achievements and deficiencies of key elements of his metaphysical framework. Sang Hyun Lee's work *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* highlights the importance of disposition and possibility in Edwards's metaphysics and thus presents a fuller account of Edwards's lapsarian theology.² Additionally, the works of Jensen, Smith, Crisp, and Morimoto provide further accounts of aspects of the metaphysical foundations of Edwards's

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¹ Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 24.

² Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

defense of the fall.³ These works, however, are not without noticeable lacuna, as they fail to bring to light the full importance of Edwards's ideas on the metaphysics of disposition and potentiality for his theology of inherited sin.

In this paper we will build on the progress made by recent scholars and elucidate as clearly as possible Edwards's metaphysical arguments as they relate to original sin in order to develop a richer and more complete account of Edwards's theology of the fall. And in so doing, we will pay special attention to the metaphysical significance of disposition and the ontological status of *possibilia*, or possible states of affairs. Although Lee and others have commented on the significance of possibility in Edwards's thought,⁴ it is our contention that this element is especially important to Edwards's conception of original sin and thus requires a more explicit emphasis in the context of his lapsarian theology. Without understanding the profound but often implicit value Edwards places on a metaphysics of potentiality, readers will be unable to fully grasp the force of his theological arguments.

As part of our goal of advancing a fuller account of Edwards's view of the metaphysical underpinnings of original sin, we will also work to show that Edwards's understanding of the fall is morally justifiable. Part of our contention to this effect will focus on the role of beauty in Edwards's lapsarian thought. All in all, Edwards's view is not only metaphysically plausible, but also theologically superior to rival views on original sin such as those advanced by Edwards's primary opponent in this arena, the English dissenting preacher John Taylor.

To develop these claims we will proceed as follows. First, we will address a range of historically important views on original sin, charting somewhat the landscape of lapsarian theologies. Second, Edwards's defense of the scope or pervasiveness of human sin will be explored in detail. In doing so, we develop the idea that significant metaphysical claims, specifically about the nature of dispositions and the ontological status of possibility, are advanced by Edwards in his defense of the truth of universal human depravity. Third, we explore how the metaphysics that enables Edwards to defend the universal scope of sinfulness allows him to respond to the claim that original sin depicts God as unjust, a charge that represents the "Great Question" Edwards seeks to resolve. Fourth, we advance arguments that underscore how Edwards's arguments assuage the sense of injustice that might arise from God's actions, underscoring the moral justifiability of the doctrine of original sin. Fifth, we address the contention that belief in original sin is morally enervating, generating only a crippling moral incapacitation. In response to these challenging difficulties, we will present the relevant arguments that show the positive moral consequences that may follow from Edwards's conception of the fall, highlighting the importance of considerations of beauty to Edwards's defense of original sin. We conclude the work with a brief summary of our primary argument: Edwards's view of original sin provides a powerful contribution to contemporary philosophical theology.

³ Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*; John E. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards: Puritan, Preacher, Philosopher* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1992); Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Arni Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

⁴ See Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 35-7, pp. 79-80.

1. The Landscape of Lapsarian Theologies

Before any detailed account of Edwards's view on original sin is undertaken, we must summarize several of the major opposing views on how to define the idea of original sin, starting with a review of a number of traditional Western concepts. We then provide an overview of arguments that reject any traditional account of original sin, using Edwards's argumentative nemesis John Taylor as a representative. Next we summarize the lapsarian theology of Edwards, paying special attention to how he advances novel ideas in relation to earlier developments of the doctrine.

Original sin has often been defined in the West as a three-fold doctrine. In many traditional accounts, all humans are inherently prone to sin and, in Augustine's words, they are *massa peccati*. Second, all humans have a profound inclination to sin because of the misdeed of Adam, the *peccatum originale*. Third, all humans are born, as a result of Adam's iniquity, in a state of genuine moral guilt, or *originalis reatus*, and, as such, all humans are in need (to varying degrees in various traditions) of the saving action of God from birth.⁵ The idea of original sin has been expressed in many different variations, especially with respect to the question of how the sin of Adam is connected with subsequent humans. We will explore two major articulations as to how the sin of Adam is related to Adam's descendents.⁶

First, advocates of the so-called seminal/realist model hold that we inherit sin via transmission through our parents.⁷ The nature of humanity was present in Adam and was corrupted by Adam's transgression, and this corrupted nature is literally transmitted to subsequent generations through procreation. Major advocates of this view include perhaps

⁵ There are many and diverse ways original sin has been understood. The guilt at birth, especially in the Catholic tradition since developments following the Council of Trent, has often been seen as genuine, yet attenuated. Hence the Catholic Catechism calls original sin a less than fully personal sin. (Catechism, Part 1 chpt 1, Art. 1, para 7, 405.) The Baptist tradition has a rich and variegated approach to original sin. Some Baptists have, with Eastern theologians and others, rejected original sin altogether, an approach as early as that of John Smyth. However the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 comes very close to holding to a belief in sinfulness at birth, a view reiterated by the influential Philadelphia Confession of Faith in 1742 and the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. Original sin has been advanced by many Baptists, especially in America, where "Calvinism became the predominant Baptist dialect." E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 279. Baptist theologians who hold to an original guilt have advanced a number of views, including, especially among those influenced by the so-called General Baptist movement, views limiting God's condemnation of children who die before they are capable of making a profession, e.g., that children who die before a profession is possible are not condemned owing to a special divine consideration for childhood; the special mercy of God; or that God has elected all people to salvation who would die before a profession is possible, among other views. For an overview see Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003).

⁶ For a classic statement of the distinction between the two models explored here see G.P. Fisher, "The Augustinian and Federal Theories of Original Sin Compared" *The New Englander* 27 (1868), p. 480.

⁷ This is often associated with traducianism, the view that our very souls are generated by our parents, but this need not be the case. For a helpful discussion see Roger Crisp, "Pulling Traducianism out of the Shedd." *Ars Disputandi* volume 6 (2006): "It is perfectly consistent for a creationist [one who sees the soul as directly created by God] to be an Augustinian realist." Para 54 fn 49.

the most important advocate (and some argue, the originator) of the idea, Augustine of Hippo (who, to be sure, “vacillated markedly”⁸ on how to understand our connection with Adam). Other advocates include Anselm of Canterbury⁹ and Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰ Due to the profound influence of Augustine, this view has often come to be termed Augustinian realism.¹¹

On this account there is no injustice in the transmission of sinfulness from Adam to his offspring. This is so, first and foremost, because God’s actions are not wholly intelligible to finite creatures, hence injustice cannot be assigned to divine acts humans cannot fully comprehend. As Augustine notes of the fall and of the works of divine redemption, “who can avoid referring this to a profound mystery?”¹² For as scripture recounts, the “mystery of lawlessness” is clarified only in the light of the “mystery of our religion.”¹³ Augustine nevertheless does not leave the issue of original sin entirely to the realm of mystery; he cautions rather against an over-reliance on human capacities to render the fall intelligible, while not assigning to it a fully apophatic character. He argues that original sin can be satisfied at the bar of at least a rough and intuitive sense of justice. This is so, first, because all humans really were in Adam in some genuine sense. Although not present as conscious individuals, we were present through a shared human nature: the human nature we inherit was present fully in Adam at the time of his transgression. According to this realist position, the species *really* sinned when Adam did, even if its members did not do so consciously.

Since we were, in some sense at least, actually present in Adam, the assignment of guilt to us is rendered most intelligible and morally defensible. Also, despite the frequent acknowledgement of its mysterious quality, the fall of Adam and the inheritance of sinfulness are further justified based on how the sin of Adam was so terribly egregious. Being of such a terrific magnitude, justice in fact required the correspondingly enormous punishment found in the corruption of Adam’s descendents. Hence Augustine writes: “Whoever thinks such punishment [which visits blame and recompense to the sons for the iniquity of their father] either excessive or unjust shows his inability to measure the great iniquity of sinning where sin might so easily have been avoided...For where the penalty annexed to disobedience is great, and the thing commanded by the Creator is easy, who can sufficiently estimate how great a wickedness it is, in a matter so easy, not to obey the authority of so great a power, even when that power deters with so terrible a penalty?” Augustine’s idea is that the prelapsarian Adam had everything he could reasonably want—he enjoyed communion with God, freedom from laborious work, the absence of death, a ready helpmate; and the command in the garden not to eat from one and only one tree, and this was easy to comply with; further, Adam knew that the consequences of his transgression

⁸ Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1997), p. 114.

⁹ Because of our connection through a shared human nature, when Adam sinned he made “the nature [of man] sinful.” Catechism, c. 23.

¹⁰ “The soul of any individual man was in Adam, in respect of...its dispositive principle [or nature] ...and the bodily semen, which is transmitted from Adam...disposes the soul.” ST q. 83 art. 1 resp 3.

¹¹ In terms of Catholic Christianity the teaching of Augustine on original sin was decreed at the XVI Council of Carthage in 418, the II Council of Lyons in 1274, the Council of Florence in 1438-1445, and at the Council of Trent in 1545-1555.

¹² *City of God*, Book 15, chp. 18.

¹³ *Ibid.* 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:16 (NKJV).

would be detrimental not only to his own life, but also to others' lives as well. Therefore that Adam did in fact sin forces us to conclude that his iniquity was of an almost incalculable quality. In response to so massive a sin so massive a punishment cannot be considered disproportionate or incongruous.¹⁴ Inherent in the Augustinian articulation therefore is at least some attempt to account for divine justice in light of the punishment of the first sin committed by Adam.

A second traditional approach to the connection between Adam and his progeny is sometimes called immediate imputation and is often associated with the Reformed tradition. The immediate imputation model denies inherited pollution through mere physical connections via a shared human nature transmitted through procreation and instead bases the assignment of individual blame on an act of divine imputation alone; the moral guilt of Adam is imputed to his descendants. In most articulations of this concept there is also an emphasis on the inscrutability of the divine act and thus on the limitations of its justifiability to human reason. Calvin himself, who advanced a view similar to immediate imputation, writes in words that influenced the Reformed tradition profoundly that “[imputation] is owing to the wonderful counsel of God. It is very absurd in [] worthy defenders of the justice of God to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. How it is that the fall of Adam involves so many nations with their infant children...unless that it seemed meet to God. Here the most loquacious tongues must be dumb.”¹⁵ However, as in the realist tradition, the question of the assignment of moral blame to posterity—to individuals themselves not directly responsible for the iniquity of the first parent—occasioned many theologians to resist the admonitions of Calvin and to defend the justice of God against the appearance of divine tyranny—at least, with the goal of satisfying to some extent our rough and intuitive sense of justice. It is in this respect that the development of the idea of Adam as a judicial and federal head or representative becomes important.

The conception of Adamic representation is thought to justify the transmission of sin from Adam to subsequent generations. Introduced by Cocceius, a teacher at Leyden in the early 17th century, and developed more fully by the highly influential scholar Turretin, a professor at Geneva in the second half of 17th century,¹⁶ the immediate imputation model based on Adamic representation has exercised a substantial influence on Western theology. The logic of Adamic federalism holds that Adam was a legal agent acting on behalf of all posterity. His decisions can bring ruin, as a corporate, municipal, or other legal agent can through his decisions cause misfortune to befall all whom he represents. To be sure, humanity did not actually authorize Adam as an agent or in any way select or elect him. Instead, Adam was selected as humanity's representative by God. However by this very fact, humanity could not possibly have had a better representative than Adam: humans could not have chosen any more wisely than God. Hence, for humans to be punished for what their legal representative did on their behalf should not violate our sense of justice, as humans had

¹⁴ Ibid., Book 14, chp. 15.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes* III, xxiii, 7.

¹⁶ For a detailed history see A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II (American Baptist Publishing, 1907), p. 612.

a truly exceptional representative, one better known to be reliable than we could ever have determined for ourselves.¹⁷

Hence, both the realist and the federalist viewpoints emphasize the mysteriousness of the fall of man but both also endeavor to demonstrate, at some level, its moral justifiability. This is based in key elements of the Augustinian view on the excellence of Adam's condition and how this condition facilitated the easy avoidance of sin; and in elements of the immediate imputationist view, on the excellence of Adam's character as man's federal representative.

Such views, however, have met with considerable criticism. The Augustinian view met with sharp attack by Pelagius and others of a similar mind such as Julian of Eclanum, while also being rejected by most in the Eastern traditions. Furthermore, both the Augustinian as well as the federalist views came to be sharply criticized in the early modern period, a rejection that would enjoy a remarkable cultural salience, one continuing to this day. One prominent modern opponent of original sin in either of its traditional forms was Jonathan Taylor, a dissenting preacher and theologian active in Norwich England from the 1730s through the 1750s.¹⁸ Taylor advanced a formidable attack on the three core elements of a traditional doctrine of original sin—the universal scope of human iniquity; a scope of depravity inherited by all through our close affiliation with Adam; and an inherited defect that is actually sinful, making humans born guilty and in need of saving grace from birth. Taylor rejects these views in what came to be a much-read work entitled *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*, written in 1735.¹⁹ Upon its publication in 1738, Taylor's arguments cast a long shadow of doubt spanning from Great Britain to New England upon the veracity of the traditional account. The main thrust of Taylor's arguments consists in his view that the Bible contains no scriptural evidence for the claim of original sin, and therefore Christians have little reason to lend any credence to it.²⁰ In addition, however, three arguments of a more philosophical nature are developed: (1) that the view of human nature inherent in the doctrine is inaccurate, and thus that humans are not uniformly prone to sin; (2) that any view that looks at sin as not conscious and individual misunderstands the very meaning of sin, which, *ex necessitate rei* can only be a personal

¹⁷ For a contemporary articulation of this view see R.C. Sproul, *Reason to Believe* (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter, 1982), p. 97. Another perspective on original sin, one which comes close to repudiating any moral intelligibility to the actions of God, can be found in the so-called mediate imputation model first developed by Joshua LaPlace in the 1640's. This approach asserts that individuals are born with a depraved nature, and God punishes individuals simply for their necessarily depraved actions, and without any reference to the iniquity of Adam as the source of the blame from which the depraved nature has come to be: the depraved nature of all at birth is sufficiently blameworthy in itself (independently of any connection with Adam) to merit punishment by God. As many theologians have asked, why would God punish people for actions resulting from an entirely unearned state of depravity? By not at least attempting to connect punishment to a prior transgression, mediate imputation, as Pink has recently summarized the case, leaves God's acts entirely morally unfathomable. Arthur Pink, *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2001), p. 84. As Holifield notes, most Calvinists "rejected LaPlace's innovations." *Theology in America*, p. 59.

¹⁸ Other influential critiques developing at the time include Samuel Webster's *Winter Evening's Conversation Upon the Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757).

¹⁹ John Taylor, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Proposed to be Free and Candid Examination*. (London: J. Waugh, 1740).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

offense. Taylor claims, “their sin, the evil action they committed, was personal...[and so] nobody committed that sinful act of disobedience but they [Adam and Eve] themselves.”²¹ To deny to sin meaning that inherently limits sinfulness to personal conscious acts by discrete individuals is illegitimately to assign to sin a new and indefensible meaning. Such a perverted conception of sin—where I could sin, and thus deserve punishment, based on the actions of other distinct individuals—is, Taylor maintains, morally tyrannical. Edwards paraphrases Taylor’s arguments thusly: Taylor asserts that “Adam and his posterity are *not one*, but entirely *distinct agents*” and so no assignment of blame for non-personal ‘sin’ is justified.²² (3) Taylor argues that the entire doctrine of original sin is morally enervating to all who might, either through ignorance or poor instruction, come to believe it. Being told that one is congenially afflicted with a deep tendency toward sin and thus is inherently defiled in the sight of God can only cause despair—a despair likely to create sinful behavior, behavior which but for the doctrine might never be exercised.

Jonathan Edwards develops in his treatise on original sin, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, a fascinating response to the views of Taylor and others holding similar conceptions. First, Edwards sets forth unambiguously that he believes in the traditional three-fold concept of original sin found in either of the forms described above: namely, that all are prone inherently to sin; that as descendents of Adam all inherit the pollution of Adam’s original transgression; and that we are all born guilty at birth due to our connection with the first father of the race. Furthermore, the most pressing objective of Edwards in this work seems to be to develop a response to the charge of divine injustice. As Robert Jensen notes, this is for Edwards “the great objection.”²³ One can sense in reading Edwards just how deeply the charge that original sin depicts God as unjust gnaws at him—how he senses in it an especially galling charge against the faith. He notes in somewhat lurid detail the “vehement exclamations” and “black colors” and “frightful representations” he sees in the works of the critics of the traditional view²⁴—betraying, we can infer, just how emotionally invested he appears to be in upholding a traditional account. Edwards evinces something of that same passion that inspired the prophet Ezekiel, through whom God would declare: “Oh house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair?”²⁵ Indeed, as many other commentators, including John Smith point out, refuting the charge against the justice and benevolence of God was Edwards’s “animating concern.”²⁶

Hence, following the views advanced in the Augustinian tradition of seminal realism and the writings of Adamic federalists, Edwards seeks to provide some account of the justice of the divine action of assigning blame to Adam’s posterity. He first argues that the dark inheritance of original sin creates a “depravity of nature,” which “remain[s] an established principle in the heart” of all humans—a rather conventional Calvinist view of total depravity.

²¹ Ibid., p. 13.

²² Jonathan Edwards, *Original Sin*, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 394. Italics in the original. See also p. 410: “the force of the reasons brought against imputing Adam’s sin to his posterity (if there be any force in them) lies in this, that Adam and his posterity are not one.”

²³ Jensen, *America’s Theologian*, p. 148.

²⁴ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 394.

²⁵ Ez. 18:29 (NKJV).

²⁶ Smith, *Writings*, p. 92

The descendents of Adam suffer from a permanent and persistent inclination towards sinful behavior. And this propensity is in itself actually sinful. This sinful tendency to sin is the result of a divine punishment, as is true in conventional Calvinism. Interestingly, however, the punishment is the result of an apostasy “participated” in²⁷ by all humans as individuals. In other words, the wide scope of depravity and this personal guilt at birth exists because of *personal* culpability that descendents of Adam *individually* earn through a genuine cooperation and agreement with Adam’s acts of apostasy. Edwards therefore suggests that in some real sense we coexisted and cooperated with the first father, and much more so than in the seminal/realist view. For we in some sense actually were consciously present as individuals “in” Adam, and for this reason we justly bear the scars of his iniquity—which, in fact, is but a shared iniquity.

More specifically, Edwards’s conception of original sin asserts that Adam was created with two principles, supernatural and natural. As Smith recounts, “man was made with a so-called inferior or natural principle, [which] is the principle of human nature—self-love, natural appetites and passions—and a second, called a superior and divine principle, comprised [of] the divine love, which is the image of God and man’s righteousness. The first corresponds to what the Bible calls *flesh*, and the second the *spirit*.”²⁸ Adam disobeyed God and as a punishment was visited with the removal by God of his supernatural principle. Adam therefore became reliant only on his natural principle. This principle, being the principle of unregulated self-love, consigns Adam to live without “true virtue,” that is, the consistent and selfless dedication to God: self-love therefore is a principle of sinfulness. All individuals after Adam inherit this unhappy estate. But we inherit it not because God wills us to bear this stain, as in the immediate imputation model, nor because we were unconsciously present in some seminal form in Adam through our shared human nature, as in the Augustinian conception. Rather, it is because we possess some “literal oneness” with Adam as individuals, as conscious, voluntary co-participants in Adam’s transgression.²⁹

This is strong language, indeed. Not only do we inherit the sinful disposition of our first father, but we also somehow coexist and “participate” with him in his fall. Hence because we are in fact guilty as conscious individuals to some real extent, the sin of Adam is “imputed to us because we sinned; [it is] not [that] we are guilty because it is imputed to us.”³⁰

But how could this possibly be true? Edwards’s thesis seems to stand in direct opposition to our commonsense notions of personal identity. If we reject that we are individually responsible for the Adamic fall, however, how then can we, as Taylor forcefully asks, fairly bear the burden of another man’s sin? Further, why cannot we also, following Taylor, simply deny the first premise of the traditional doctrine altogether and so assert that there is in fact no general or overarching *tendency* to evil in human affairs? One could well argue that man

²⁷ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 391.

²⁸ Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 92

²⁹ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 391.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 408. For a classic discussion of the meaning of imputation in Edwards’s thought see Charles Hodge *Systematic Theology* Vol. II, section 12. Also, this is not to say that Edwards rejects altogether the Augustinian and immediate imputationist approaches. He does speak of Adam as “federal head” (see pp. 259, 260); and as discussed below, he accepts elements of the Augustinian concept.

has a greater capacity to do good than is acknowledged by the proponents of original sin. Indeed, Edwards himself recognized that a growing number of people were coming then—as many have come now—to view human sin as in some way socially constructed and not innate. What is more, why cannot we go even further along the path of Taylor’s arguments and affirm that he and other opponents of the traditional doctrine are right in identifying something deeply enervating to moral striving in the idea of inherited and pervasive human sinfulness? For how can *that* inspire moral courage and energize moral advancement?

To defend Edwards’s theology of original sin, therefore, three major claims must be confronted and defended: first, the pervasiveness of evil in human life; second, the communication of innate sinfulness through some form of co-presence with Adam, a form of transmission that can satisfy our intuitive sense of the justice of divine action; and third, that belief in original sin does not convey a morally enervating consequence. In the following sections we start with the first issue, setting forth how Edwards establishes the universality of human depravity. We then move to show how his defense of pervasive sinfulness puts in place ideas and principles that enable Edwards to respond to the charge of divine injustice through a distinctive argument about the virtual co-presence of all humans in Adam, that is, our presence as genuinely existing *possibilia*. Lastly, we argue that, seen together, Edwards’s ideas advance claims that need not be morally enervating but in fact have a potentially morally elevating impact.

2. The Pervasiveness of Sin and the Importance of an Ontology of Disposition and Possibility

Following the predominant accounts in the West, Edwards’s understanding of original sin has, as we have seen, three sub-components. The first is the uniformity of sinful tendencies, which Edwards asserts results from the loss of the supernatural principle that was first in Adam. Edwards holds that if we can rigorously establish this first claim—that evil is pervasive—we shall have established the second claim, that pervasive sinfulness is owing—and justly owing—to the actions of Adam and our close affiliation with him.³¹ But how does the first claim establish the second? Edwards, we must confess, is not entirely clear on how this is so.³² The first claim secures the second because the defense of pervasive

³¹ Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 85.

³² One way that Edwards argues that the first proposition entails the second is that if we credit that all are prone to sin, then “however the matter be attended with difficulty, *fact* obliges us to get over the difficulty, either by finding out some solution, or by shutting our mouths, and acknowledging the weakness and scantiness of our understanding” (*Original Sin*, p. 395). In other words, Edwards seems to claim that if pervasive sinfulness is acknowledged then a sufficient basis exists for holding that this sinfulness comes from our connection with Adam. For once pervasive sin is acknowledged, we can rely in reverent awe solely on the account of its origin supplied by sacred scripture, “respecting what is so plainly and fully taught...concerning the derivation of a depravity and guilt from Adam,” (p. 409) giving specially pious attention to Romans 5:19: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (NIV). Edwards seems to imply, then, that men, faced with the pervasiveness of sin, will intuit a coherent fit between their condition and the account of its origin supplied by Holy Writ. Of course Edwards also attempts to supply some form of rational argument for the origin of pervasive sin and thus, consistently with traditional views, seeks some form of justification, beyond a reliance on *sola scriptura*.

sinfulness implicates an understanding of metaphysics that will prove essential to Edwards's understanding of the just nexus between fallen humans and Adam.

Edwards holds that humans are each prone to evil, understanding evil to mean the exercise of an in-dwelling disposition toward self-love, which, because not under the control of a countervailing principle of selfless love of God, is sinful. Before the fall Adam had a superintending disposition toward the selfless love of God; however, we, his heirs, now must labor without such a superintendence that can reliably regulate our self-love and consistently consign it within permissible boundaries. It is important to note, however, that Edwards does not assert that we *always* act sinfully, only that there is an indwelling general tendency in all of us toward sinful acts.³³ We have what commentators have called a *disposition* to sin. Dispositions are an important aspect of Edwards's metaphysical framework, a point emphasized ably by Lee, Smith, Morimoto, among others. A disposition is for Edwards a real ontological category.

This understanding sets Edwards apart from the school of thought that would later be called metaphysical particularism. As Smith argues, "The 'particularism' of the tradition of British empiricism expressed the doctrine that all that 'really' exists is the individual case." This doctrine, Smith and others note, "runs counter to the belief in natural kinds, tendencies or universal structures in the scheme of things." Such a particularist view received formulation in works such as J.S. Mill's *A System of Logic*, and claims that all reasoning is "from particulars to particulars without the need for rational structures in between."³⁴ If one adhered to such a view then the pervasiveness of sin would be lost, as Edwards does not assert that each human act is necessarily sinful. Edwards found the particularist conception "too limited and insisted on the need to recognize the reality of tendencies and propensities"—ontologically real forces that become manifest "through a multitude of events and actions."³⁵ Human sinfulness is not detected, therefore, by assaying each individual human act in isolation—as some acts may not be sinful—but by seeing the indwelling existence in each person of a real force or tendency toward sin, which itself is sinful. Edwards therefore was a 'realist' in the philosophical sense; reality is not exhausted by particulars, because there are, as well, "continuing structures in the natures of things which are real factors in shaping how they will behave."³⁶

These continuing structures or dispositions are logically interrelated, coherent rules prescribing action, which dwell within objects. A disposition is an abiding principle, law-like and logical, that influences the occurrence and character of actual events.³⁷ And human sinfulness is just such an indwelling law or principle.³⁸ It is critical to note, however, that an indwelling disposition does not control all and every action of entities that have the

³³ Edwards speaks of a "natural tendency" to sin (p. 120), which is deduced by observing what is constant *or general* in events (p. 108; emphasis added). And he notes, consistently with this definition, that humans often perform wholesome works (pp. 120-129). Hence Jenson notes, "an argument cannot be mounted against the doctrine by claiming that we sometimes do good" (p. 145).

³⁴ Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 87.

³⁵ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision*, p. 59.

³⁶ Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 87.

³⁷ Sang Hyun Lee, "God's Relation to the World" in *Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), ed. Sang Lee (59-72), p. 59-60.

³⁸ Lee, *Princeton Companion*, p. 59-60.

disposition. This is necessarily the case for Edwards, since sin is a disposition in humans, and dispositions are real indwelling forces, yet humans informed by this disposition do not always act sinfully, as dispositions do not always issue in actuality.

By establishing the first point in his argument against Taylor, namely the pervasiveness of evil, Edwards relies therefore on an interesting metaphysics of disposition. It is an important point to note that an ontology of disposition implies also a very strong view of the ontological status of *possibilia*. As Lee writes, given Edwards's realist, anti-particularist view of dispositions, dispositions have a "mode of reality apart from their manifestations" in actual actions and events.³⁹ Dispositions "are ontologically real and causally law-like powers,"⁴⁰ that possess "a mode of reality as real possibles" independent of full actualization.⁴¹ This is a critical point in Edwards's metaphysics—the ontological reality of *possibilia*. Dispositions therefore are not "meer potentiality" but are ontologically present; "whether manifest or not...[a] disposition...is a *real* potentiality."⁴² As Morimoto affirms, a disposition "has its own mode of reality apart from and even prior to its actual existence. It is not that the disposition achieves its reality only when or only after it is triggered into actual existence."⁴³

It is important for us to see the combined implications of Edwards's metaphysics of disposition. Dispositions define general ways of acting. Hence the human disposition to sin is the sinful disposition for men to act in ways that do not bring glory to God. And dispositions therefore are abiding principles in the world that genuinely exist even though the ways of acting that they prescribe are not always fully actual. The human disposition to act this way is real and present even when humans do not commit sin. As Marsden points out, "Edwards [notes] that...every human ha[s] a disposition dominated by an inclination to sin. Sin...involve[s] a person's inclinations, not just isolated acts. So Adam was guilty for his...inclination to commit [] sin as well as for [his] acts. Similarly, people [are] culpable for their corrupt natures that incline them to sin before they might actually act on those inclinations." (p. 454). The sinful disposition is real apart from its manifestations, as the potential acts prescribed by the disposition are real. The disposition is sinful because it contains genuinely sinful acts in a real way—as genuinely existing *possibilia*.

To be sure, there is a kind of seductive simplicity that comes with understanding reality to include *either* actually existing *or* not existing, *either* real *or* unreal, entities. Such a view seems to come with a degree of epistemological comfort. But that picture, Edwards argues, is inconsistent with the structure of reality and, as part of this, with our indwelling tendency to sin, which is a real sinful presence even when we do not actually sin.

3. The Ontology of Disposition and Possibility Allows Edwards to Provide a Response to the "Great Question" of Divine Justice

As we have noted, the second critical aspect of Edwards's response to Taylor is the defense of the justice of God in assigning blame to Adam's descendants for Adam's iniquity.

³⁹ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 63.

⁴⁰ Lee, *Princeton Companion*, pp. 59-60.

⁴¹ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 79.

⁴² Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision*, p. 59. Emphasis added.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

This represents in fact “the great question” and “the grand objection”⁴⁴: how can the punishment for one person be inherited by later generations? How especially can this be so for a follower of the eternal Christ, the everlasting fulfillment of the prophet Jeremiah, who would reveal that “children’s teeth” shall no more be “set on edge.”⁴⁵

Edwards claims in *Original Sin* that if the universality of sin is established, then the response to the critics of divine justice can also be established. But how exactly is this so? We argue that this is due in part to the conclusions opened up on the basis of an ontology of dispositions.

One way in which the dispositional ontology of Edwards can be seen to relate to his assertions respecting the close connection between Adam and the rest of humanity has frequently been noted. The ontology of dispositions serves in Edwards’s framework to displace an older ontology of substance. As Lee points out, “Edwards saw reality not in terms of substances and form, as had been done for so many centuries, but rather as a network of law-like...dispositions.”⁴⁶ In the Aristotelian-Scholastic ontology, “the idea of substance explained the self-abiding aspect of the existence of an entity, and the categories of substantial form and essence referred to the character and structure of being.”⁴⁷ These were, in the Thomistic tradition, created by God, but once existing they were thought of “as *forma completiva*,”—having subsisting existence. Edwards rejects the idea of a divinely created subsistence in the created realm.

Instead, he holds that all created entities are inherently dependent on God at every moment. Furthermore, “all dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning.”⁴⁸ To exist outside of God is to be subject to flux and perpetual change, Edwards maintains. The question emerges therefore as to how the evident orderliness of the universe obtains. The created world exhibits its evident stability by being constantly invested with order by God. And this order is in the form of invested dispositions, through which “every kind is ordered, regulated, and limited,”⁴⁹ and through which a “settled course” is established.⁵⁰ Hence “constancy and regularity”⁵¹ depend on God’s investment of a law-like disposition in the world of created objects. Of course, it is not the case in the order of being that God creates a disordered mass and *then* imbues it with a dispositional order. Rather, God creates dispositionally ordered beings in the first instance, and maintains their dispositions. But in the order of knowing, we first appreciate how any entity created by God would be dependent, and then how all dependent beings would be in perpetual flux, were it not for a divinely invested disposition and the constant maintenance of that disposition by God.

When this new ontological framework is applied to human identity—to the question of what provides continuity over time to conscious individuals qua conscious individuals—a

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 394.

⁴⁵ Jer. 31:29 (NKJV).

⁴⁶ Lee, *Princeton Companion*, p. 59-60

⁴⁷ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 404.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 401, 397.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

fascinating view unfolds. The continuation of the same conscious individuality, Edwards maintains, is “itself dependent on a law of nature established by God.”⁵² That is, what it is about a person that allows us meaningfully to separate him from other persons and to do so across time consists only in the person’s divinely constituted disposition.⁵³ “Personal identity...depends on ...divine constitution,”⁵⁴ through the creation and maintenance of a disposition in each person. The divinely imposed disposition provides the “inward conformation” that is the “real essence” of an individual.⁵⁵

This aspect of Edwards’s philosophy is often interpreted to mean that since the identity or oneness through time of created objects such as persons depends on God’s will as found in created dispositions, there is, therefore, as Vincent Thomas phrases it, no difficulty in believing that God can “reasonably treat Adam and his posterity as if they were one.”⁵⁶ How exactly does this argument work? One common reading emphasizes an analogy between a tree and its branches. Both in the work of contemporary scholars such as Lee and in the classic histories of writers such as Perry Miller, there emerges in the exegesis of Edwards a dominant role for Edwards’s recurring images drawn from nature. A favorite analogy to which Edwards returns time and time again, and which commentators often seize on, is that of an oak tree. Edwards writes,

Thus a tree, grown great, and an hundred years old is one plant with the little sprout, that first came out of the ground, from whence it grew, and has been continued in constant succession; though it’s now so exceeding diverse, many thousands times bigger, and of a very different form, and perhaps not one atom the very same: yet, God, according to an established law of nature, has communicated to it many of the same qualities...as if it were one.⁵⁷

On the grounds of such a passage, the argument appears to be that just as God can view the tree as one thing through applying to it a single disposition—even though the tree can also be seen to be made up of many distinct elements—so too God can look upon Adam and subsequent humans as constituting a single entity. God can treat Adam as the root of a mighty oak constituting all humans growing forth from him, designating all humans as one entity—exactly as he can designate, through the creation of a disposition in nature, a tree as one entity though its constituents, considered in themselves, can be seen as fragmented and diverse. The unity of the tree comes through the imposition of a disposition conferred and sustained by God. So, too, on this reading, unity between Adam and subsequent humans arises from a constituted oneness imposed by God. There is therefore some kind of a genuine unity between all humans and Adam. As Edwards writes in *Original Sin*, we rightfully have the sin of Adam because we in some way really were in Adam, and so suffer “the

⁵² Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 96.

⁵³ For Edwards the divinely constituted disposition in individuals is comprised of a continuous stream of consciousness in the mind *and* some underlying “sameness of substance” (p. 399) which, however, does not operate as a substance in the older Aristotelian understanding; its meaning is “radically new” (Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 49).

⁵⁴ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 399.

⁵⁵ Edwards, *The Mind*, no. 47. P. 367. And Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 398.

⁵⁶ Vincent Thomas, “The Modernity of Jonathan Edwards, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Mar., 1952) (60-84), p. 83.

⁵⁷ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 400.

extended pollution of that sin, through the whole tree, by virtue of the constituted union of the branches with the root.”⁵⁸ This is thought to be a defensible claim because, Edwards argues, “no solid reason can be given, why God, who constitutes all other created union or oneness, according to his pleasure...may not establish a constitution whereby the natural posterity of Adam, proceeding from him, much as the buds and branches from the stock or root of a tree, should be treated as one with him.”⁵⁹ Therefore, “root and branch being one, according to God’s wise constitution, the case in fact is, that by virtue of this oneness, answerable changes of effects through all the branches coexist with changes in the root.”⁶⁰

Such a view, however, is rather difficult to fathom as an argument that could justify divine acts at the bar of an intuitive sense of human justice. If Edwards’s thought is left just at this level, one might well be inclined to support Charles Chauncy’s rather bold assertion that Edwards’s view represents “as wild a conceit of a vain imagination as ever published to the world.”⁶¹ His view could engender such denunciation for the simple fact that if we are seen by God as one with Adam by God’s uniting us to him, then we would be added to the identity of an individual who *has already sinned* and thus one whose disobedience we would have no ability to change or to challenge. In other words, the branch has no control over the earlier actions of its root.⁶² A constituted union *ex post facto* of new branches to an ancient taproot does not render the branches morally culpable for the *earlier* actions of the root. Hence, can it really be *reasonable* for God to treat Adam and you and I as one being? Or, is Charles Chauncy correct?

Indeed Edwards appears to concede that his argument for divine justice cannot be left at the point of a branch grafted to a bole. He wrestles much more profoundly with the idea that we are each guilty of Adam’s iniquity. Again, he asserts, in logic inconsistent with the grafting of a bough to a trunk, that Adam’s sin is “imputed to us because we [did it]; [it is] not [that] we are guilty because it is imputed to us.”

So how exactly are God’s actions considered just on such an understanding? To wrestle with this question let us ask: “What arrangement would allow us unambiguously to consider as just God’s having given all of us Adam’s punishment (the loss of the supernatural principle in our soul and our resulting sinfulness, along with death, and the thorns and thistles that surround our daily life)?” To answer this question, let us engage in a thought experiment, and then see how Edwards’s metaphysics operates to provide an answer to the charge of divine unfairness.

We argue that the ontology Edwards sets out in establishing the general nature of sin allows him to respond to the impugning of God’s justice and benevolence. To see this more clearly let us imagine that God created each person who has ever or who will ever live on

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

⁶¹ *Five Dissertations on the Scripture Account of the Fall, and Its Consequences* (London: C. Dilly, 1785), pp. 271-72.

⁶² In this regard it is similar to the seminal/realist view which connects Adam and his progeny but not in a way such that there is shared personal, individual responsibility for the transgression in Eden. That the realist view can not assign individual responsibility to the branch for the actions of the trunk was argued against the development of the idea of original sin by Julian of Eclanum among others.

earth at one point in time, namely, in the Edenic garden. On this view all humans would have co-existed, that is, would have simultaneously been co-present with Adam. Further, let us imagine that each person simultaneously freely chose to sin against God. After this, imagine that each entered a kind of “soul-sleep” and was put back on earth at the point of natural birth. We would on this scenario all be genuinely guilty at birth. We would not remember our past disobedient act, to be sure, but we would be guilty nonetheless, and so our punishment would be conspicuously just, once we were apprised of our earlier transgression. Under this scenario God’s justice would seem unimpeachable. Indeed, one major scholar thinks that Augustine actually held to this view, the noted theologian R.J. O’Connell.⁶³ Moreover O’Connell seems to maintain this interpretation of Augustine precisely because he thinks that Augustine must have seen its compelling logic and conspicuous justification for the troubling aspects of the traditional doctrine of inherited sin.⁶⁴

Edwards, however, does not hold to this view of actual physical co-participation in Adam’s iniquity by us as preexisting souls. We know he does not because when Edwards speaks of our unity with Adam he speaks of it “as if [we] were one” with the father of the race at the time of Adam’s fall.⁶⁵ He asserts that God looks upon individuals today “as *though* they were partakers with Adam in his act of sin.”⁶⁶ Therefore in Edwards’s thought we were not physically one with Adam at the time of his transgression. Edwards says, “God dealt *more immediately* with Adam.”⁶⁷ Edwards quotes approvingly the theologian Stapferus: “it must be confessed, that Adam’s posterity did not put forth their hands to the forbidden fruit: in which sense, that the act of transgression, and that fall of Adam cannot be physically one.”⁶⁸ Instead, God treats us such that we, “Adam’s posterity,” are “united to him... so as to constitute one ...*moral* [and not physical] whole.”⁶⁹ We are affixed to Adam and so take on his moral blame.

⁶³ See R.J. O’Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine’s Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987). Indeed, in *De libero arbitrio* 3.20, 58 Augustine explicitly states that were this the case, and there were “souls existing in some [previous] place”...who come “of their own accord” to sin and “[later] inhabit bodies,” it would be “easy to see that [punishment] is the consequence of their own choice,” and thus is just. O’Connell argues that Augustine came to believe precisely this, since Augustine affirms that “when a man has a separate existence and becomes other than the one who begot him, he is not responsible for another’s sin without his consent” (Epistle 98). O’Connell argues that Augustine came ultimately to believe in the preexistence and fall of souls and their rebirth as justly condemned sinners as the solution to the question of the justice of God. For being literally with Adam as voluntary individuals, we can then be seen to have willfully sinned as individual agents who are assigned a punishment consequent to our freely chosen act. Ronnie J. Rombs, *Saint Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O’Connell and His Critics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), p. 102. This interpretation of Augustine has been questioned, to be sure. See Rombs, *Saint Augustine*, p. 104.

⁶⁴ See Rombs, *Saint Augustine*, p. 106.

⁶⁵ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 397. Emphasis added.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.394. Emphasis added.

⁶⁷ From Edwards, *Original Sin*, quoted in Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 94.

⁶⁸ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 392.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 391. Emphasis added. Furthermore, the Origenian idea of preexistence seems inconsistent with biblical statements that imply special creation of souls at birth, such as Romans 9:11,

However, since Edwards rejects actual co-presence at the time of Edenic transgression, we face a predicament. Edwards seems to acknowledge that arguments about the divinely constituted connection of the branch of subsequent humanity to the taproot of Adam are insufficient, and that conscious sinning by us as individuals along with Adam at the moment of the fall is needed to vindicate divine justice; that is why he claims that blame is imputed to us only because of our “actual” guilt. Indeed, he asserts that “it seems pretty manifest, that none can, in good consistence with themselves, own a real imputation of guilt of Adam’s first sin to his posterity, without owning that they are justly viewed as sinners, truly guilty.”⁷⁰ However, he does not believe that actual transgression by us in the Garden transpired. How, therefore, can God be considered just?

Here is where Edwards’s metaphysics of dispositions, we argue, provides assistance. If we posit a divine *disposition* to justice, then God’s actions become morally explicable. “The Lord loves justice,”⁷¹ the Psalmist reminds us, and justice as Edwards seems to acknowledge, appears to require preexistence and the free fall of all from Edenic grace, with a subsequent rebirth of individuals thus born with a moral stain—for how else can we be “truly guilty”? A divine disposition to justice, therefore, would be a disposition to create this narrative, this dramatic array of events marked by co-presence and a simultaneous fall from grace. The divine disposition would be one toward justice, which in turn means that it would be a disposition toward the following actions (although a divine disposition to justice would contain much more than this): creating a co-presence of all in Eden; a free fall from grace by all co-present; an ensuing “soul sleep” or transient mortalism of the soul of the co-present actors; and, finally, the punishment at natural birth of each person on the basis of actual moral iniquity.

This appears to express a logical interrelationship among actions and, therefore, each act could be considered aspects of a divine disposition to justice. Being free from internal contradiction, such a set of actions could thus form aspects of a law-like pattern, a defining feature of a disposition for Edwards. Hence, if this set of events had been actualized, there would be no question of the moral justifiability for inherited sinfulness: human sin would be owing to a just punishment.

This scenario, however, did not actually obtain. Given the ontology of Edwards, though, why would that matter? This is where the ontology of disposition that underwrites Edwards’s defense of the first element of original sin—the general tendency of mankind to sin—plays, we argue, a critical function. As we have seen, implicit in the ontology of dispositions is the ontological reality of *possibilia*. We must remember that Edwards thinks that dispositional laws are real, and laws include possibility, and so possibilities in turn are real. If we credit a divine disposition to justice, then, we can be said really to have coexisted as *possibilia* with Adam and to have fallen. For again, it is not the case that dispositions achieve reality “only when or only after they are triggered into actual existence.”⁷²

where the twins Rebekah and Isaac are “not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad”—hence, not preexistent (NASB).

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.412.

⁷¹ Psalm 37: 28 (NKJV).

⁷² Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision*, p. 136.

Dispositions are “ontologically real principles apart from their manifestations in actual applications.”⁷³

As we have seen, human sinfulness is for Edwards a disposition of our being, one that is itself genuinely sinful, yet not all human acts are sinful, i.e. the disposition is not entirely actual, yet it is genuinely sinful because it contains as *possibilia* sinful actions, and these actions are real apart from actualization. Preexistence and a fall, therefore, can be considered real although never actualized by God. A divine disposition to justice—which seems to require some form of genuine preexistence, fall, and rebirth—would qua disposition be ontologically real. For, once more, dispositions are real independently of the actualization of their constituent elements. Therefore, just as we are sinful because of a disposition that exists apart from actual instantiation of sinful acts, God could be just independently of the instantiation of each element of this disposition, because those elements genuinely exist as *possibilia* independently of their instantiation. Preexistence and a prior fall can be thought of as ontologically real despite not having been actualized, therefore, as long as a divine disposition to justice be posited, given how Edwards’s metaphysics of disposition establishes a strong ontological claim to the reality of *possibilia*.

On this account, then, in some not unreal sense we were in or with Adam and freely fell; we were so *in potentia* through the divine disposition toward justice, which again is real and, qua disposition, does not demand to be fully actual. Edwards therefore can say that we *are* guilty, and thus because of this, guilt is imputed to us. Given the ontological status of *possibilia* inherent in a disposition, Edwards can say that views that deny inherited sin are “really founded on a false hypothesis, and wrong notion of what we call *sameness* or *oneness*.”⁷⁴ They are false because, on the view we are developing, they do not account for the ontological status of *possibilia*, and in turn the real (but unactualized) co-presence of all in Adam and free fall from grace that would follow from a divine disposition to justice.

4. Establishing Further How A Divine Disposition of this Kind Satisfies Our Sense of Justice

The animating objective of Edwards’s piece is, as we have noted, to satisfy our sense of justice in light of God’s punishment of individuals who seem to have no connection with Adam and bear no responsibility for his fall. We have endeavored to make progress showing how Edwards can overcome this difficulty. However, we still need to show that each *element* of the disposition we have described is itself just and plausible. Can each of the elements that would make up the divine disposition be considered fair? For example, is it just for God to have a view that sees us as having freely fallen? If the constituent elements of the disposition are not in themselves fair, the disposition would be to no avail in responding to the “Great Objection.”

How the view sketched above satisfies our quest to see God’s acts as just is therefore a critically important question. At the outset it is important to emphasize that in addressing the justice of God’s actions the idea of mystery has to be borne in mind: it is presumptuous for us to say that we can know what God’s justice is entirely. Although seeking to develop an argument about the justice of God, Edwards never demands exactitude or absolute

⁷³ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 397.

precision, something the traditional views also avoid. Edwards cautions against the “extreme arrogance” of standing as an imperious external judge on the wisdom of God.⁷⁵ But neither is Edwards willing to rely only on mystery, as if we cannot have any sense as to whether what God did in the drama of original sin can be considered just. Given the quest for justification and the need for humility, the issue of original sin must, it would seem, involve a *sense of justice*, not an apodictic mathematics of justice.

Indeed, Edwards counsels us to deploy such an interpretive framework by referencing how “persons of common modesty and sobriety” are to be the benchmark to judge the justice of God’s action.⁷⁶ Hence, the charge Edwards is most concerned to rebuke is that original sin is an offense to our intuitions or our sense of justice—that it strikes us in the gut as unfair, offending commonsense notions. What we need therefore is a sense of God’s acts that render them intelligible to our own moral intuitions. Hence, we are not asking how God can act as those actions are in themselves. That very question would go against the modesty and sense of sobriety Edwards counsels. Rather, we must ask if there is a way that the actions of God can be described to us as being fair according to our rough intuitions of justice. For this reason, exactitude is not relevant, both because the mystery of God precludes it, and because our sense of justice, to be restored, does not demand it.

In this spirit we must explore how the posited disposition and its constituent elements could in our eyes be just. To do this must address each of the elements of the disposition, and then address a broader question concerning the partially unactualized character of the disposition. We shall proceed to examine, in depth, the fairness and plausibility of: (1) a view that sees us all as co-present with Adam; (2) as freely falling with Adam; (3) as entering a “soul sleep”; and (4) as having a punishment visited at birth on us for sins we do not remember. In addition, (5) we have to address how the existence of this divine disposition could be plausible given that it does not fully become actual. We shall take each step in turn, unpacking its relationship to an intuitive sense of plausibility and justice.

1. Co-presence: God could have created us all alongside Adam. This is consistent with divine omnipotence and would seem to pose no obstacle to our common sense notions of divine power.
2. A freely chosen fall by all co-present could have justifiably taken place. We can see how a sense of justice would not be offended by God’s having such a view of us by analyzing six related points.
 - a. Adam freely chose to sin according to Edwards. As Edwards argues in *Miscellany* no. 436: “Adam’s will was free.” Hence as he states in the tract *All God’s Methods Are Most Reasonable*, “[Adam] did it of his own free and mere choice.”⁷⁷
 - b. There would be no necessity to our *not* sinning were we co-present with Adam, so it is possible that we too could have freely sinned had we been simultaneously present with Adam. As Edwards asserts of the tragic events in the Garden, “God is in no way

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

⁷⁷ Edwards, *All God’s Methods are Reasonable in Sermons and Discourses: 1723-1729*, in *Works*, ed. Kenneth P. Minkema, *Works* 14 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p 168.

obliged to afford his creature such grace and influence as shall render it impossible for him to sin.”⁷⁸

- c. But if God had created a world where it was possible for us freely to fall with Adam, then in that world we would have no reason to conclude that we would not also have fallen.
- d. This is so because, first, for Edwards God knows through his foreknowledge that Adam would freely fall, as Adam actually did. Edwards holds that “God has an absolute and certain foreknowledge” of Adam’s fall.⁷⁹ One might however deny this premise. We might in other words say that the premise that God foreknew that Adam would freely fall runs afoul of the “dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge,” as Zagzebski and others term it. But, once again, epistemic modesty is required. For a believer, such a claim can be considered valid on the basis of expert testimony—the testimony of the church fathers. The doctrine of divine foreknowledge of Adam’s free fall from grace is a long held Christian concept that seems required by the attribute of divine omniscience, which itself is correlative to divine omnipotence. In humility we can remind ourselves of the claim of Ockham, “I maintain that it is impossible to express *clearly* the way in which God knows...That he knows what he knows must be held because of the pronouncements of the Saints.”⁸⁰
- e. Had God created us alongside Adam, there is in fact no reason for us to suppose that we would not have sinned freely. Here the Augustinian and federalist traditions combine to form a powerful inference. For Augustine, God punishes all because the sin of Adam was so egregious; and the sin was so egregious because Adam had everything he could rationally desire, and every possible advantage—and yet he sinned. Hence so terrific a sin deserves a terrific punishment. Implicit in Augustinianism is that we too would have sinned had we been there, since Adam seemingly had all, yet he sinned. Further, in the federalist view, Adam is held to be a perfect representative, one such that no better representative could be selected. On both accounts it can fairly be asked, who are we to think we could have done better than Adam? That we too would have sinned, given that Adam sinned, is reasonable to the point of moral certainty, given how Adam sinned despite the incredible ease of his not doing so, and the incredible character he must have had for God to have selected him as our representative. As such, the premise of God viewing us as freely falling from grace were we co-present with Adam appears justifiable.
- f. This conclusion, we must concede, is only an inferentially supported one. An objection to the fairness to our own mind of this element of the divine disposition to

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

⁷⁹ Edwards, *On the Freedom of the Will*, p. 30. In *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Henry Rogers and S.E. Dwight, Edwards Hickman (London: W. Ball, 1839).

⁸⁰ *Trac. De Prae*, q. 1. See also Pascal Massie, *Contingency, Time, and Possibility: An Essay on Aristotle and Duns Scotus* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008), p. 267. The fathers should include but by no means be limited to Saint Augustine, who holds clearly, “You would not directly compel the man to sin, though you knew before that he was going to sin.” *De Libero Arbitrio*. This view is so widespread that all “orthodox views” claim it. “Foreknowledge and Free Will,” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, available at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/foreknow>.

justice could be leveled on the basis that an inferential claim is an insufficiently strong basis to ground the justifiability of a severe form of punishment.

We must remember that the objective is to render divine acts intelligibly justifiable to our limited understanding. One way to see that such an inferential basis for the justice of the divine disposition comports with our intuitive sense of justice is to draw analogies to other areas of life where intuitions about justice play a prominent role. One area is the legal system. Indeed, Edwards often describes the sentence on Adam as a judicial determination made in a divine courtroom: “God condemned acting as judge in a judicial proceeding,” he claims.⁸¹ Indeed legal references are advanced frequently by Edwards.⁸² It would seem strange therefore if we did not try to draw lessons for theological analysis on the basis of judicial proceedings, proceedings where humans do the best they can, without a moral calculus or arithmetic, in order to solve pressing problems according to standards that are at least reasonably just to our limited understanding.

Viewed in this light we should note that in the criminal justice system, guilt is defined by a standard of moral certainty, or proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and inferences can secure such a level of proof. Sentences are not based on a standard of knowledge per se. This point is relevant since, again, the argument that we would have sinned is inferential and so could be said not to be based on knowledge per se. But knowledge per se is irrelevant when matters are viewed from a judicial perspective, given that courts require only proof beyond a reasonable doubt—or moral certainty—and not knowledge in any apodictic sense.⁸³ As Stoffelmayr and Diamond note, “courts have long recognized that proof beyond a reasonable doubt means a high degree of proof, but not absolute certainty.”⁸⁴ Hence federal courts in the United States have held that proof beyond a reasonable doubt “does not require proof of guilt beyond all possible doubt. The test is reasonable doubt. A reasonable doubt is based on reason and common sense—the kind of doubt that would make a sensible person hesitate to act in an important matter.”⁸⁵ Hence American courts reject that “absolute certainty and moral certainty are one in the same.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, claims short of absolute truth — claims based on moral certainty or proof beyond a reasonable doubt—are the basis for exacting the harshest of punishments. Inferentially grounded claims can be the basis for major punishments, including death. Judicial fairness in the sense of what would be required to engage in the death penalty in a trial is, therefore, apposite to

⁸¹ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 183.

⁸² See for example, Edwards *Original Sin*, pps. 398, 405, arguing for a conception of legal guilt.

⁸³ Of course truth has been defined by philosophical Pragmatists and others as precisely residing in claims less than absolutely certain.

⁸⁴ Elisabeth Stoffelmayr and Shari Seidman Diamond, “The Conflict between Precision and Flexibility in Explaining ‘Proof Beyond a Reasonable Doubt’” *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* vol. 6 no. 3 (2000) (769-787), p. 770.

⁸⁵ *United States v. Sonulj*, 700 F. 2d 51, 69 (2nd Cir. 1983).

⁸⁶ Stoffelmayr and Diamond, “The Conflict,” p. 770. The trial attempts to secure as best it can an assessment of the truth of the event in question, but actually reaching truth per se is not required, only assertions that are justifiable to a very high standard of probability. Were truth per se required, trials might well be interminable and inconclusive, subject to on-going disputation.

our discussion. And capital trials do not require knowledge⁸⁷ but, like all other felonies, only (very heightened) reasonable inference, or moral certainty. So we only need reasonable certainty to establish the moral intelligibility of inherited sin. And we can infer, with this level of certainty, that since Adam fell so would we.

For these six reasons, a disposition that viewed us as freely falling as co-present agents with Adam can appear to us as both plausible and just.

3. Next we must ask whether God could plausibly visit a kind of “soul sleep” on humans after their first fall.⁸⁸ This is certainly possible on Edwards’s view, as the soul is united in its vital functions by a divinely composed disposition; that disposition could by God’s “arbitrary constitution” be revoked, only to be later remade.
4. Another question emerges as to whether God could visit a punishment for an earlier transgression on individuals at birth. In the disposition described, individuals would be punished for an act they do not remember. Could that be fair? However we should bear in mind that we do not in legal contexts use lack of memory as an exculpatory factor in assigning blame. Western legal systems do not look at criminal responsibility as being attenuated by a lack of memory of a prior action. “Amnesia is irrelevant as long as the

⁸⁷ The idea that, from our perspective, we can fairly see ourselves as liable to fall were we co-present with Adam, being based on an inference justiciable at that bar of moral certainty, is a claim that does not involve knowledge per se. Hence it does not implicate the contested issue of *scientia media*, first developed by Molina and Suarez. Middle knowledge is the truth of counterfactuals of freedom, or in other words, what one would freely do if placed in any set of circumstances. By following Edwards’s requirement for epistemic modesty we are not asking how God himself knows things. Rather, we are asking how claims that God would know can make sense to us in at least some rough sense. Hence from this perspective, we conclude only that it is morally certain that we would have fallen. Hence this viewpoint avoids the criticism of *scientia media* developed by a number of philosophers. Robert Merrihew Adams, for one, argues that there can be no middle knowledge based on an inferential claim. Adams argues that counterfactuals of freedom cannot constitute knowledge if based on an inference grounded in claims respecting agents’ character, for it would only thus be a probabilistic assertion, and not a claim to knowledge. See “Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2 (April, 1977) (109-117), p. 115. As Gaskins argues, “counterfactuals of freedom cannot be grounded in the agent’s dispositions to act, for such dispositions support nothing better than the prediction that an agent will or would probably perform the relevant action, not that he will or would perform it *simpliciter*.” Richard Gaskin, “Middle Knowledge, Fatalism and Comparative Similarity of Worlds,” *Religious Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2 (May, 1998) (189-203), p. 189. This problem is avoided because the goal, being establishing moral certainty and not knowledge per se, in order to ground in our own mind the fairness of the disposition, *can* rest merely on a high probability. By not requiring and so not asserting a claim to full knowledge, the argument avoids many possible problems with the theory of middle knowledge, and does so on the grounds of epistemic modesty.

⁸⁸ The idea that the soul between death and the resurrection and final judgment dies or falls “asleep,” to be reborn at the end of the age is often associated with Luther, who writes that “the soul after death enters its chamber and peace, and sleeping does not feel its sleep” (Commentary on Genesis – *Enarrationes in Genesin*, 1535–1545) in M. Luther *Exegetica Opera Latina* Vol.5&6 (Elsberger edition 1830), p.120.

agent's actions were conscious and voluntary at the time." Hence, "amnesia per se cannot reduce criminal responsibility."⁸⁹

5. We can now examine a broader question, one that might be thought to impede a defense of God's justice along the lines developed above. However much the elements of the divine disposition to justice can be viewed as internally coherent, plausible, and morally justifiable, a basic question might arise concerning the reality of such a disposition and its internal elements, on the basis of its being, by admission, only partially actualized. One could well ask why, if preexistence and a common fall were aspects of a divine disposition, preexistence and a common fall were left unactualized? Even if we credit—as we must on Edwards's premises—that not every aspect of a disposition need be actual for elements of a disposition to be real, why were not *these* elements of the disposition made actual? Why would preexistence and the fall be left only to the realm of *possibilia*, even if we credit that qua *possibilia*, they are ontologically real? To leave such a fundamental question unaddressed is perhaps to leave the issue unsettlingly opaque, and for the claim that there is such a divine disposition to lose its persuasive power.

This objection however has to be seen in the context of Edwards's "common modesty and sobriety"—that epistemic perspective that does not seek exactitude and so is accepting of views that satiate only an intuitive sense of justice. Seen in this light, the objection can be shown to be based on a truncation of a divine disposition to justice. The scope and breadth of any divine disposition to justice must only be described as enormous, even incalculably so. Scripture recounts that "justice [is] the foundation of God's throne."⁹⁰ Since God's being is immeasurably vast, justice, which supplies the very foundation for the throne-seat of God, must equally be vast. For this reason the Psalmist writes, "his justice is like the great deep."⁹¹ And "who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?"⁹² Given the vastness of any divine disposition to justice, involving as it would much more than Adam's fall, comprehending as it must the entire economy of salvation and the future works of God, who are we to hold that because some elements of the disposition are unactualized, doubt should be cast on the reality of the divine disposition, and its internal constituents?

Moreover, that God can contain dispositions is central to the interpretation of Sang Hyun Lee. Indeed, he argues that God's entire nature and being has a dispositional character (a claim to which we do not commit ourselves).⁹³ The key point is that God's containing a disposition that is not fully actualized in creation does not impugn the fullness of his being, for the disposition itself is real, and no orthodox theology holds that all that is real in God is or must be expressed in the created order.

In all, given the context developed above, which dictates that we must approach the issue of a divine disposition to justice with an appropriate epistemic modesty, and how we must remind ourselves that exactitude is not necessary to satisfy a sense of justice, that there is a

⁸⁹ Angela R. Birt, John C. Yuille and Hugues F. Herve, "Memory for Murder: A Psychological Perspective on Dissociative Amnesia." *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* vol. 24, issue 1 (Jan-Feb 2012) (23-42), section 2.2.2.

⁹⁰ Psalm 89:14 (NKJV).

⁹¹ Psalm 36:6 (NIV).

⁹² Is. 40:12 (NKJV).

⁹³ See *Philosophical Theology*, p. 173.

divine disposition of the sort described can be seen to satisfy our sufficiently humble assessment of the justice of divine actions. Hence, if we posit a divine disposition of this kind, it would seem, indeed, in the words of Vincent Thomas, “reasonable” for God to treat Adam and his posterity as if they were one. Hence, if this conclusion be secured, the assignment of blame to us at birth would appear morally justifiable, presenting a response to the “Great Question” of divine justice.

5. Developing a Response to the Third Objection of Moral Incapacitation

The last of Taylor’s three great charges is that accepting original sin is ill conducive to our moral striving; that it is morally enervating to be thought to be born with the affliction of inherited sin. We shall argue however that such a conception can in fact be morally elevating. Recognizing that we are born with moral failure can empower us as moral agents for at least the following reason. The Taylorian alternative to traditional accounts of original sin can reasonably be thought to offend a sense of beauty. Edwards defines beauty as the reconciliation of opposites and as proportionality. But a world without original sin, a world along Taylor’s lines, can plausibly be seen to offend such a conception of beauty. This consideration is for Edwards deeply important, precisely given his view on the morally empowering character of aesthetic delight.

To believe that it is enervating to be born with the stain of a sinful disposition, one has to acknowledge that had one either not really in some sense (including as *possibilia*) preexisted or had one not been imputed sin by a sovereign God, then it would seem to be the case that one would have been born in this life as Adam originally was. But there is no reason to think that had one been born in this life with the condition of innocence Adam originally enjoyed, that one in this life would avoid recapitulating Adam’s tragic fall. This would mean that this present world would show a constant series of willful betrayals of the divine and of falls from states of Edenic grace. This would make our world, however, hideously ugly. And on Edwards’s view, *this* would have a deeply enervating consequence on our moral striving.

To develop this idea, let us first explore in more detail the idea that had we been born in this life in Adam’s state of moral innocence, we have no rational basis for concluding that we would not sin gravely. This contention is found in the Augustinian and the Reformed traditions. Edwards clearly believes it, for he writes, “Tis reasonable to suppose that Adam was *as likely*, on account of his capacity and natural talents to persevere in obedience, as his posterity... if they had all been put on trial singly for themselves” in this life.⁹⁴ However he develops this idea more fully than is found in Augustinian or Reformed thinking. He advances additional arguments for why betrayal of God would be commonplace in a world where, in the words of Ola Elizabeth Winslow, “each birth [is] a new beginning,” unstained by original sin.⁹⁵

Edwards argues that if we were innocent in this lifetime, we would each fall on our own.⁹⁶ This is so because we are of course born in this life in a condition of immaturity and

⁹⁴ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 396.

⁹⁵ Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards: 1703-1758* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 281.

⁹⁶ Edwards seems to supply a number of arguments that would support the conclusion that, were we born without original sin, we would nevertheless fall, at one point arguing that since we, in this life, do not have the same weight on our shoulders as Adam—since Adam knew, Edwards at some points

become full moral agents only over time. This means that, even were we free of a corrupted nature, we would be open to a great play of temptation.⁹⁷ Assuming the absence of original sin, being required to grow from a state where initially our passions and emotions rule our action—the state of early childhood—to a state where reason might govern our affairs would mean that “God has order[ed] it so that men should be brought into being with a prevailing tendency to sin. For th[e] strength...[of] sensitive appetites and animal passions com[ing] before persons come to the exercise of their rational powers, amounts to a strong propensity to sin.”⁹⁸

This is so because in this life our early appetites are unchecked by a fully formed rational assessment of value. Due to our requirement to mature gradually, we are immature for long periods and so it is hard for us properly—despite a good will—to discriminate among contending courses of action in our youth. We are thus prone to act on what appears to us, based on our desires, to be good. But for an agent to know what lies beyond appearance—to access and understand the thing-as-it-is as opposed to what it appears to our emotions to be—requires a certain depth of perceptive ability and rational judgment, precisely what children are unable to discern. And these bad choices, in turn, develop deeply rooted habits, making the vigorous and consistent use of our reason infirm for the rest of our life.⁹⁹ Hence, even if we were born without original sin, due to our being born in a state of immaturity we would come to defile our initial innocence and betray God.

Edwards anticipates a response to his argument, one that argues that bad initial formation can be addressed by the proper education of children during their formative years by their parents. Edwards argues that the view that parental instruction can perfectly mold the character of a child is simply naïve and unsupported by the historical record. He recounts how Noah, though pure, saw “in about fifty years after [his] death the world in general [] overrun with dreadful corruption.” So too with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were “eminently pious,” and planted by God as a “noble vine,” yet Edwards asserts, “how soon did their posterity degenerate.”¹⁰⁰ Many examples demonstrate either that our nature is inherently corrupt at birth *or* that the power of youthful passions is such that even the noblest of parents are unable perfectly to contain the outbreak of sin, which inevitably misshapes character away from God, occasioning betrayal of the creator. Hence, had we all

seems to maintain, that an iniquity by him would result in the ruination of his progeny—we, who do not face this mighty burden, would certainly fall were we born without original sin. Since Adam, despite the knowledge that his misdeed would ruin his descendants, still transgressed, we too must be assumed to be such persons as would transgress were we also born innocent. See Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 396 where he writes: “with Adam as head there was a greater possibility of a happy outcome [than compared with us had we been born without original sin in this life] because Adam had a stronger motive to be cautious than any of his successors since he had to stand for them [his progeny] as well as for himself.” Since this is not true of us, a greater likelihood would exist for disobedience by us than by Adam. Edwards however is not entirely consistent on this point, as he does indicate, in words at odds with what he has stated above, that “with regard to the motives and obligations which our first father sinned against, it is not reasonably alleged that he sinned when he knew his sin would have destructive consequences” (*Original Sin*, p. 193).

⁹⁷ See Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 96; and Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 396.

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 202.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

been born in this life free from the stain of Adam—if in other words we imagine the universe to be as Taylor describes—we would still, as beings needing maturity, be in a state of tremendous vulnerability, and for this reason, we would each most likely betray our God and fall from our state of initial innocence.

But an ontology in which the original apostasy, the move from innocence to guilt, is recreated on numberless occasions, with each individual over and again treasonous to God, is aesthetically inferior as a cosmology, because the relationship of mankind to God would be characterized by a continual pollution of beauty and of desecration of innocence. What is ugly and deceitful would enjoy victory over the beautiful and noble constantly, in a tremendous number of recapitulations of the ugliness of expulsion from the garden. This ugliness has two dimensions. First, the act of falling corrupts innocence, which, as Augustine points out, is the corruption of proportion and order and the infection of disorder. The sense of proportion so essential to beauty—beauty again in Edwards’s mind being in part “proportion”¹⁰¹ and “harmony with other laws and constitutions”¹⁰²—would be undermined by each individual’s fall from grace, and so ugliness would be magnified and recapitulated on countless occasions. Second, there would be a vast number of betrayals, yet only one act of redemption, and so again the world would be surfeited with the ugliness of betrayal without a corresponding symmetry. This asymmetry would be ugly precisely because Edwards identifies as a further aspect of beauty “the harmonious reconciliation of opposites.”¹⁰³ Thus, an ugly world would ensue were humans free from original sin.

This conclusion is vitally important for Edwards. Avoiding such a degree of cosmological ugliness has a morally positive aspect. Why? Because for Edwards beauty is closely connected with the moral empowerment of individuals. Edwards writes strikingly that beauty “makes the soul love itself.”¹⁰⁴ Edwards seems to think that the recognition of harmonious order is morally elevating. It fortifies an appropriate sense of self-worth¹⁰⁵—a sense of one’s dignity that can fuel moral improvement, allowing one to see oneself as capable of progressing toward charitable ideals. Ugliness on the other hand exacerbates moral disorder. Further, beauty is a key aspect of “divine wisdom” for Edwards.¹⁰⁶ To see beauty allows one to feel confident in the presence of divine wisdom. As Edwards states, if the beauty of the divine constitution is “well considered” and conspicuous, then divine wisdom “may easily be made evident.”¹⁰⁷ Seeing the encasing presence of divine wisdom in the world, as evidenced by the world’s beauty—its proportionality—also improves our self-worth. These claims are tremendously important. They show that as the fall advances our recognition of beauty and the divine wisdom, it is thus morally empowering.

¹⁰¹ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, p. 79; quoting Edwards, “The Mind” no 1, *Works*, p. 336.

¹⁰² Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 406.

¹⁰³ Jenson, *America’s Theologian*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16. See also p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ It is important to avoid confusion. Edwards does argue that human nature since the fall is mired in excessive self-love. But it is the fact that our self love is excessive and inconsistently regulated that makes it so detrimental: it is not the mere fact that we have self love. For if that were the case God would not have given the prelapsarian Adam both a supernatural *as well as* a natural principle.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 406.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

A question might arise, however, as to which individuals are capable of acquiring this recognition of the world's greater beauty and so of enjoying the ensuing benefits. Would it only be possible for those who, by grace, have had themselves rendered open to the full truths of creation? Would only they be able to see the greater beauty of the world marked by the fall? If this were so then the conclusion would be rather underwhelming, as people with grace have much less need to rely on their own efforts to achieve moral progress. That a recognition of the world's beauty could further improve *them* would be underwhelming as grace is already improving them mightily. But Edwards nowhere commits himself to the proposition that improvement by our own reasoning and our own rational efforts to regulate our self-love is impossible. This follows from the nature of our disposition to sin, which entails only a strong tendency to sin, not that all our acts are sinful; it follows also from Edwards's description of the natural power of conscience to stimulate moral improvement under the right natural conditions, described in *A Divine and Supernatural Light*.¹⁰⁸ As John Smith notes, individuals without true virtue are capable of seeing beauty in the created order and recognizing the greatness of God's moral order; they are simply unable on their own to reach the full summit of virtue. But progress apart from the gracious gift of true virtue is possible.¹⁰⁹ Perceiving these points, we are able to respond to the third charge developed by Taylor, namely, that the doctrine is morally enervating. In fact, the doctrine can be thought to have an elevating moral consequence.

Moreover, the recognition of the world's greater beauty, given original sin, can create a virtuous cycle, with further recognition of the beauty of the world only enhancing our proper sense of self-esteem. This is so because Edwards also holds that beauty "not only removes the hindrances of reason, but positively helps reason...ideas themselves, which otherwise are dim and obscure, by this [aesthetic] means have a light cast upon them, and are impressed with greater strength; so that the mind can better judge them."¹¹⁰ And as argued above, this benefit can accrue both to those with grace and to those without full grace who are struggling on their own to achieve self-improvement.

Empowering reason enables the beauty of the world to be further registered. This is so for the following reason. Through a rational exploration of the logic of creation one could well imagine a world similar to that described by the leading figures in the *via moderna* of the 14th and 15th centuries, a school of thought represented by towering figures such as Jean Gerson and Gabriel Biel. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries the *via moderna*, in the words of theologian Alister McGrath, sought to answer the question, "what must I as an individual do to merit salvation?"¹¹¹ Members of this school answered with the famous phrase, *facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*. God will save those who strive as best they can to serve Him. Gabriel Biel explained that 'doing your best' meant "rejecting evil and trying as best

¹⁰⁸In *Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings*, ed. Winslow (New York: Meridian, 1966), p. 125. See also Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 120 .

¹⁰⁹Smith, "Christian Virtue and Common Morality," in *Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (147-166), pp. 157, 160. George Marsden notes that for Edwards no action can be considered *fully* good which does not issue from a complete love of God, but that Edwards does not deny that improvement without this polestar is possible. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 452.

¹¹⁰Edwards, *Religious Affections*, p. 307.

¹¹¹Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 69.

one could do a good.”¹¹² Inherent to this thinking is the idea that man has the natural ability to perform actions that are satisfying to God. “Gabriel [] assumed,” McGrath argues, “that humans were capable of meeting this precondition” for salvation—meritorious action—“without undue difficulty.”¹¹³ According to such a view, God sets a minimum of religious requirements, and holds individuals accountable only should they fail to meet this minimal standard; he does not treat the absence of perfect virtue as a betrayal of his glory. God would look on the occasional heart-felt dedication as sufficient for salvation.

This view however is aesthetically inferior to the world defined by original sin. In contradistinction to Edwards’s understanding of original sin according to which individuals are born with some form of personal guilt acquired in Eden, on this view there would be an apparent randomness and unintelligibility to matters of ultimate significance—one’s eternal estate following death. For if individuals are supposed to have the power to do a minimal standard of works, then when this standard is not met the only conclusion can be that the individuals are deservedly destined to hell on the basis of not performing the minimum degree of beneficent action. However this life (prescinding from considerations of grace), is one that dispenses the enabling conditions for such a minimal exertion by our own power on behalf of God quite without intelligible pattern—at least, without a pattern intelligible to human insight. Some are born, as George Schlesinger and Linda Zagzebski have both pointed out, either better or worsely suited for this level of religious devotion than are others. As Zagzebski asserts, “whatever it takes to believe in God is not something which everyone has as equal opportunity to obtain. Those who grow up in a happy religious home have obviously far greater opportunities for salvific Faith than those who grow up in deprived circumstances in which religion is either non-existent or, perhaps even worse, is associated in their experience with bigotry and hypocrisy.”¹¹⁴

In response to the idea that some could simply work harder to overcome their circumstances, Zagzebski argues that “there is also luck in the traits of character which lead some people to make greater efforts needed for salvation.”¹¹⁵ Some could, by what appears to us simply an accident of birth or upbringing, be situated in what Edwards in *Original Sin* calls “exceeding different states”: some individuals would, based on their felicitous ability to perform minimal standards, be “perfectly innocent and holy” (since on this view only a minimal effort will secure one’s innocence in the eyes of God); but others, cast into more infelicitous circumstances, would be “corrupt and wicked.” Hence the work of synergistic co-participation with God at a minimal standard would see, in Edwards’s assessment, “some needing a savior, but others needing none; some in a confirmed state of perfect *happiness*, but others in a state of public condemnation to perfect and eternal *miserery*; some justly exposed to great calamities in this world, but others by their innocence raised above all suffering.”¹¹⁶

We revolt at such randomness, and rightly see it as hideous and ugly. As such, a world in which liability for punishment were based solely on behavior in this life would be a world in

¹¹² Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 72. See also Heiko A. Oberman, “Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Mysticism” *Church History* 30, no. 3 (259-287) (1961).

¹¹⁴ Zagzebski, “Religious Luck,” *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994) (397-413), p.409.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 409.

¹¹⁶ Edwards, *Original Sin*, p. 407.

which liability for punishment would be (at least apparently) randomly assigned based on the luck of enabling conditions, that is, familial, physical, spiritual and psychological conditions one is born into. Such a state would be, in a deep sense, confused, hideous, and ugly—lacking as it would all intelligible proportionality. The uniformity of just condemnation appears in turn much more harmonious.

An objection to this claim, however, can emerge in terms of grace. For does not grace assign reprieve from the just punishments on an unforeseeable and, from our human perspective, random basis? Would not this apparent randomness infect the world with ugliness? A key point however is that with grace God is not randomly giving to some individuals *more* punishment than they deserve; on Edwards's account there is no randomness to the punishment in the sense of its being excessive or beyond desert: it is due to you in some real and presumably justifiable sense. Hence, it is not the case that some are damned beyond what justice would require, it is only that some are immune from this just punishment, for all are under a just condemnation. As Brynmor Browne argues, "Luck in rewards [and other benefits] is not nearly so bad as luck in punishments; it is not as bad if some people are rewarded beyond what they control and deserve than for some people to be punished beyond what they control and deserve."¹¹⁷ In other words, Browne argues that it is sensible to hold that as long as none who is punished is punished beyond desert, then that some are given the benefit of reprieve is not a problem for those thinking *rationally*. As Browne compellingly maintains, "should anyone perceive this situation as one which gives rise to a problem of fairness, then I suggest that it is the *attitude* of the person who thinks there is a problem which is at the heart of the difficulty."¹¹⁸ This is so because "the actions which are involved in praising [and benefiting] are not against the agent," as would be the case with punishments beyond desert. And thus on the basis of reason, we can and must escape seeing the praise and benefit of another as conferring any unjust loss to ourselves.¹¹⁹

If one has this rational attitude then one can see that if there were a Pelagian-Taylorian world, then given the (at least apparent) randomness of conditions enabling one to perform the minimal meritorious action required for salvation, a scarring degree of random ugliness would mar that world, leading to a loss of proportionality. The world Edwards describes is free from this and its relative aesthetic advantage can be appreciated, as long as one is not sidetracked by bitterness over the allocation of grace. To have the attitude that allows one to stay focused on the absence of undue punishment (as opposed to the existence of unearned reward)—an attitude that enables an additional recognition of the beauty of the world—is not, however, easy. It requires that one remain rational, and see that one's lot is not affected by the lot of another; that one's differential beneficial treatment in no way affects one's just desert. If one can have this rational attitude, it will enable one to focus on the absence of that hideous state wherein people's due punishment would be randomly—and so disproportionately and unprepossessingly—assigned.

However, it is precisely the delight in beauty, which the symmetry of the fall in Adam and the redemption in Christ affords, as we have described above, that can empower, Edwards

¹¹⁷ Zagzebski, "Religion Luck," describing Browne's position, p. 406.

¹¹⁸ Brynmor Browne, "A Solution to the Problem of Moral Luck," *Philosophical Quarterly* vol. 42 (1992) (345-356), p. 354. Emphasis Added.

¹¹⁹ Browne, "A Solution," p. 356.

maintains, such a rational perspective on grace. The beauty of God's actions thus creates a positive cycle, where the recognition of the beauty of one aspect of the world fuels further recognition of the comeliness of creation. And thus as the recognition of the world's beauty is magnified, so too is the sense of proper self-worth, enabling moral advancement and commitment to moral striving all the more.

Conclusion

John Smith asserts that Edwards's formulation of original sin "surpasses in insight and cogency anything [Edwards] had ever written."¹²⁰ The burden of this paper has been to establish that Edwards's brilliantly argued essay, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, can be read to supply arguments that establish a compelling basis for the traditional account of inherited sin. Edwards accurately acknowledges that original sin is seen by many as problematic and thus is in need of rational justification. We have argued that Edwards's rational engagement with powerful counterarguments to the traditional doctrine provides a sound rendering of the traditional view, allaying major charges against the concept. Perhaps, therefore, we should best close by echoing the response to a theological query made by the Separatist Congregational minister Israel Holly: "Sir, if I was to engage with you in controversy, I would say, *Read Edwards!* And if you wrote again, I would tell you to *Read Edwards!* And if you wrote again, I would still tell you to *Read Edwards!*"¹²¹ We could do far worse.

¹²⁰ Smith, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 94.

¹²¹ Quoted in Noll, *America's God*, p. 444.

Διπλὴν ἐπαγγελίαν IN ATHANASIUS' CHRISTOLOGY: A METHODOLOGY TO COUNTER KENOTIC NOTIONS OF THE INCARNATION

Theodore Zachariades*

Evangelical understandings of Christology have always tended to go on the offensive to maintain the deity of Jesus in the face of detractors. This admirable goal is both necessary and welcome. The central question of the New Testament is bound up with the identity of Jesus Christ, and in fact His identity was the very issue the Lord Himself raised to His disciples in Caesarea Philippi while He was on the earth before His death and resurrection (see Matthew 16:13-15).

Evangelicals, like this writer, generally maintain a high view of Scripture, and strive to keep our teachings grounded in Sacred Scripture. We also seek to be sensitive to the historical context of our faith, and, as such, we draw on the very rich tradition that has garnered evidence from the Bible, for the faith once delivered to the saints concerning Jesus, that has stood the test of time. One of the high-water marks concerning Christology is surely the Chalcedonian definition. In 451, a well-attended universal council of the church spawned the now famous declaration that Jesus Christ is “one person in two natures.” It is widely held that Chalcedon was a magnificent achievement of theological significance which has echoed down the centuries to our own day.¹ Indeed, the model espoused in this paper is unashamedly Chalcedonian.²

This position was not the invention of the bishops assembled, but rather a deduction from their investigation of the Scriptural writings apropos Jesus' identity. What became axiomatic in the conclusion is that Jesus was truly God and truly man. The two natures were

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¹ Blaising claims, “The definition of faith at Chalcedon has now taken its place in a tradition of Christological formulation that includes other elements that have also taken their place during the history of theology. The basic reason Protestant evangelicalism has continued to make use of these formulations is not because of a doctrine of the authority of tradition, but because those formulations are in fact descriptive of what is in Scripture” (Craig A. Blaising, “Chalcedon and Christology: A 1530th Anniversary,” in *The Bib Sac Reader*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Chicago: Moody, 1983], 102). Writing from another perspective, Grillmeier, nevertheless, arrives at the same conclusion. His final words concerning his evaluation of the Patristic achievement at Chalcedon are clear. “At all events,” Grillmeier asserts, “the Fathers believed that they were fighting for the pure picture of Christ, as it was drawn by the Bible” (Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol.1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. John Bowden [Atlanta: John Knox, 1975], 557).

² For a sympathetic review of Chalcedonian Christology, see John S. Marshall, “The Christology of Chalcedon,” *Anglican Theological Review* (1960): 117-25; and Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Mathias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1993), 211-219. For a critical appraisal seeking to move beyond the Chalcedonian framework, see A. N. S. Lane, “Christology beyond Chalcedon,” in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1982), 257-81. For a vigorous attack on the coherence of a two-natures model, see Ronald W. Leigh, “Jesus: the One-natured God-man,” *Christian Scholar's Review* 11, no. 2 (1982): 124-37.

to be kept distinct but not separated. The two natures must not be confused or collapsed into a hybrid third kind of entity that is neither God nor man. Indeed Christ is the God-man, as the Word made flesh (see John 1:14).

There were, of course, forerunners to the Chalcedonian statement of faith. Others had championed a similar definition, declaring Jesus to be truly man, while at the same time truly and genuinely God. Athanasius of Alexandria defends a “double account of the savior” message in his anti-Arian polemic that reaches a high level of sophistication with a marked sensitivity to Scriptural language. He refers to this in book 3 of his *Orationes Contra Arianos*.

The position advocated by the Bishop of Alexandria will be examined in this paper. First, a survey of contemporary kenotic thought will set the context for our discussion. Second, an exposition and evaluation is to be made of Athanasius’ Christological methodology. Third, a proposal is forthcoming, which suggests that the methodology of Athanasius’ Christology is a needed tool for today’s evangelicals, especially as some have embraced a kenotic form of the incarnation. A return to a “double account” Christology allows the full spectrum of material concerning Christ to emerge in the final portrait of Jesus as presented in scripture, and as such serves evangelicals well while they continue waging the war on detractors of Jesus Christ’s deity, who do so explicitly or implicitly.

Contemporary Christology and Kenosis

To begin, a short look at the history of *kenotic* thought will be followed by an investigation of its main theological affirmations.³ This exploration will lay a foundation before examining some modern approaches to kenotic and sub-kenotic Christology, which are at the heart of the widespread explicit redefinitions of Jesus Christ being one person in two natures, and thus entail the implicit denial of Christ’s omnipresence.

History

“The historical origins of kenoticism,” notes David Wells, “lie mainly within the debates generated by post-Reformation Lutheranism and Calvinism.”⁴ Most helpful is Hoogland’s work on this point. It contains a section on the Tübingen–Giessen controversy. He notes:

³ For a survey of the contribution of various theologians to this type of explanation of the incarnation one would do well to consult the following: H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, International Theological Library, ed. Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D. F. Salmond (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1912), 264-78; A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ in Its Physical, Ethical, and Official Aspects*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 134-91; John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 245-50; Dennis Edward Johnson, “Immutability and Incarnation: An Historical and Theological Study of the Concepts of Christ’s Divine Unchangeability and His Human Development” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984), 178-227; Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1958), 260-76; I. A. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, trans. D. W. Simon, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 214-60; and idem, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch, Introduction by Robert R. Williams (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

⁴ David Wells, *The Person of Christ: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Incarnation*, Foundations for Faith, ed. Peter Toon (Alliance, OH: Bible Scholar Books, 1984), 133.

The Giessen theologians felt that the Biblical portrayal of the man Jesus in His humiliation does not allow for a theology which presents Him as exercising the full divine power in governing the world or as being everywhere present in His human nature during His humiliation. The true human development of Christ, which involved also a lack of knowledge, they insisted, must be taken seriously, so that recognition is given to the fact that, as man, Christ developed according to the laws of His nature. The possibility of weakness and development was explained by the idea of kenosis.⁵

The fullest account of kenosis, however, which covers the subject thoroughly, can be found in Donald Dawe's historical survey.⁶ Dawe treats *kenosis* as an all-embracing theme. He consistently defines this kenosis idea with the self-emptying of God, or as God limiting himself to live a fully human life. Despite attempts to locate kenotic teaching in the early church, it is securely established that kenotic *Christology* is a phenomenon of recent origin.⁷ Dawe himself acknowledges a kenotic motif in the New Testament, and therefore believes it was clearly a part of Patristic theology beginning in the second century (and beyond throughout church history). Yet Dawe himself must admit that a fully developed kenotic Christology was not intended or evident in the Patristic writers, and instead there was merely an attempt to argue for the truth of the incarnation.⁸

One must focus on the modern era to see the first true kenotic Christologies. Macquarrie begins his survey with Gottfried Thomasius (1802-73).⁹ As the most famous advocate of kenotic Christology, Thomasius divided the divine attributes into two kinds.¹⁰ First, there

⁵ Marvin Hoogland, *Calvin's Perspective on the Exaltation of Christ in Comparison with the Post-Reformation Doctrine of the Two States* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1966), 39.

⁶ Donald G. Dawe, *The Form of a Servant: A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

⁷ Even Mackintosh, who held to a modified *kenosis*, candidly exclaims, "No one would dream of saying that the Fathers had even begun to look in the direction of a Kenotic *theory*" (*The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ*, 269). In this sense, Ramm is unjustified in asserting, "The words *kenosis* and *kenotic* derive from the Greek verb in Philippians 2:7 which speak of Christ emptying himself to become in the form of the servant (*kenoo*) Historically the text has been understood as a commentary on the incarnation Hence some kenotic assumption *has always* [emphasis added] been part of historic Christology" (Bernard Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology: Ecumenic and Historical* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985], 55). Ramm speaks for many when he comments on this famous text of Scripture. He asserts the normative status of a kenotic notion of some kind in the following way: "Historic Christology has always taught a kenosis in the incarnation if for no other reason than the text of Philippians 2:5-11 asserts it" (*Ibid.*, 58). Vincent Taylor says similarly, "Some form of *kenosis* is essential to any worthy doctrine of the Incarnation Christology, in short, is incurably kenotic" (Taylor, *The Person of Christ*, 270, 272). Of course, there are different types of kenotic thought. We must be careful to distinguish the variations so as not to unnecessarily malign a person's viewpoint.

⁸ Dawe says, "The kenosis motif seems to have played a lively part in the Christology of the second century. *Although there was no fully developed kenotic Christology* [emphasis added] at the time, there appeared in much Christian piety a naive, nonspeculative type of kenosis doctrine to explain what God had done in Christ" (*The Form of a Servant*, 53).

⁹ Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, 245.

¹⁰ Gottfried Thomasius says of the incarnation, "It is a revelation of the immanent divine attributes: absolute power, truth, holiness and love. For by the incarnation the Son did not surrender these divine essential determinations, which as such are inseparable from the essence of God, and no

were the immanent attributes such as love and mercy, righteousness and holiness. These particular attributes, argued Thomasius, were maintained by the Logos in the incarnation. The second category consisted of the so-called relative attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. These latter omni-attributes were really contingent on the creation of the world and in Thomasius' thinking, could be dispensed with by God. Hence, Jesus did not have the omni-attributes since he emptied himself of these in becoming man.

A rather more extreme form of *kenosis* is encountered in W. F. Gess (d. 1891). Ironically, unlike Thomasius' Lutheran commitment, Gess was a Calvinist. Nevertheless, Gess affirmed that the Logos gave up *all* the divine attributes. Bruce explains the position of Gess:

These attributes, therefore, the Logos parted with in His descent from Heaven; nay, not only with these so-called relative attributes, but also with those which Thomasius by way of distinction names the immanent attributes of Deity. Incarnation involved the loss not only of the perfect knowledge of the world, called omniscience, but of the perfect vision of God . . . For the Logos, in becoming man, suffered the extinction of His eternal self-consciousness, to regain it again after many months, as a human, gradually developing . . .¹¹

Taylor mentions several British scholars who took up the kenotic mantle. Of those surveyed by Taylor, he believes D. W. Forrester, *The Authority of Christ* (1906), P.T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (1909), and H. R. Mackintosh stand out; and the greatest of these is Mackintosh.¹² No doubt, Taylor is indebted to these writers for his own approach, which despite severe criticism of kenotic Christology from different quarters,¹³ he maintains the view that kenotic Christology is necessary.

more does he, as the incarnate one, withhold their use. . . . None the less, humiliation is at the same time *divesting*, continuous divesting of the divine mode of being and activity which he renounced in becoming flesh, and precisely thus a divesting of the so-called relative divine attributes, in which the immanent attributes are outwardly manifested and make their appearance: omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. He waives claim to the possession of these attributes . . ." ("Christ's Person and Work, Part 2: The Person of the Mediator," in *God and Incarnation in Mid-Nineteenth Century German Theology: G. Thomasius, I.A. Dorner, A.E. Biedermann*, ed. and trans. Claude Welch [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], 67-68, 70).

¹¹ Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 145.

¹² Taylor, *Person of Christ*, 262. He refers to Mackintosh as expressing "Christology in its best form" (Ibid.).

¹³ For example, D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 94-98, who draws on the work of J. M. Creed and William Temple for his attack on kenotic Christology. Taylor acknowledges these works yet feels that the criticisms are not compelling. For probing of Baillie's "paradoxical" solution to the puzzle of the incarnation, see J. L. M. Haire, "An Unresolved Tension in the Christology of D. M. Baillie," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964): 303-08; and Peter McEnhill, " 'Good Pleasure, Grace and the Person of God Incarnate': Interpreting the Christology of D. M. Baillie for Today," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997): 61-81. One may agree with Baillie on the shortcomings of kenotic thought, yet his own approach is less than fully satisfying. His is a functional kind of Christology, which lacks the substantive element that would provide full rationale for why Jesus is worshiped. Nevertheless, Baillie affirms the uniqueness of Jesus.

Theology

Kenotic Christology is a theology of the incarnation not merely an interpretation of one passage, namely Philippians 2:5-11, from whence it derives its name. In Philippians 2:7 Paul states that Christ emptied himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν). It is this verse that gives the kenotic view its name.¹⁴ Evangelicals have not embraced this flat-out rejection of the possession of some or all attributes for the incarnate Christ. What is probably the majority view among evangelical theologians and exegetes is a view known as sub-kenotic Christology.¹⁵ At this point it is best to illustrate the views with examples

Kenotic Theology

Despite the seeming abandonment of nineteenth-century kenotic Christology, some are attempting to revive it as a viable approach for today.¹⁶ This is stunning given some of the recent evaluations from theologians such as Berkouwer and Macquarrie. In his classic work, hailed by some¹⁷ to be on the scale of Mackintosh's earlier textbook, John Macquarrie explains the partial, if not main reason, for kenoticism's failure. "Kenotic christologies," he posits, "turned out to be no more than an episode of modern thinking about the person of Christ. Their authors were attempting to do justice to the humanistic demands of nineteenth-century thought."¹⁸ As German idealism sunk, so did Christologies wedded to

¹⁴ See my dissertation, Theodore Zachariades, "The Omnipresence of Jesus Christ: A Neglected Aspect of Evangelical Christology" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 218-42, Chapter 6: "An Exegetical and Theological Look at Philippians 2:5-8" for an extended look at the issue of whether this passage warrants a kenotic type Christology.

¹⁵ For this categorization one may consult H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 30. Sub-kenotic Christology claims that Christ *had* the attributes of deity but rather, chose either to *not utilize* them, or *used them sparingly and always in dependence on the Father*. Hence, in evangelical sub-kenotic Christology, Christ is said to have given up the independent use of his divine attributes (kenosis) in the incarnation. In this paper I will challenge both kenotic and sub-kenotic Christology. My focus on the attribute of omnipresence will seek to show that even the sub-kenotic view ends up questioning, albeit unintentionally, the full deity of Christ.

¹⁶ This is particularly troubling for evangelicals as it is they who are trying to argue that Jesus is indeed God. The problems of kenotic thought have been spelled out in several places. For example, Wells notes five problems of this theory: (1) it attempts to sever the attributes from the essence of deity, (2) it implies a disruption in internal Trinitarian relations, (3) the divine contraction affects the love of God, which gradually returned to Jesus, (4) the conversion of Godhead into manhood violates the Nicene Creed, and (5) it misplaced the element of humiliation by focusing on the incarnation rather than the cross (see David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ*, 138-39). Colin Gunton also states that a kenotic theory inevitably leaves us with a "mythical demi-god" that encounters us in Christ (see Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992], 83). Gerald O'Collins asserts that "the Council of Chalcedon declared that the properties or essential features of both the divine and human nature are *preserved* in the incarnation This teaching seems to rule out even a cautious form of kenotic theory, which proposes that the divine properties were, at least temporarily, not preserved after the incarnation, or at least not preserved in action" (O'Collins, *Incarnation*, New Century Theology [New York: Continuum, 2002], 62-63). Hence, evangelicals advocating Chalcedonianism need to abandon kenoticism of any stripe.

¹⁷ See McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology*, 259.

¹⁸ Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, 250. Macquarrie goes on to assert that in the face of radicals such as Strauss and Feuerbach, the kenoticists tried desperately to continue to hold onto a Christology from above. Macquarrie believes this to be incorrect, and partially to blame for the ever

this era. Berkouwer, on the other hand, states matters differently. “The *kenosis*-doctrine,” he claims, “did not point the way out of the impasse supposedly present in the dogma of the church.”¹⁹ Berkouwer continues: “The question remained urgent whether Christ was and could be truly God and truly man. At the end of the road, when the reconstruction of Christology was undertaken, arose the danger of the *complete humanization of Christ* [emphasis supplied].”²⁰ This appears to be the net result of kenotic thinking, yet some evangelicals are trying to reassert a kenotic theology. To these we now turn.

Ronald Feenstra.

Feenstra has attempted to explain the incarnation within a kenotic model.²¹ What is interesting in this essay is that Feenstra begins with the Formula of Chalcedon. In light of the 1500 years that Chalcedon has served the church, as Feenstra observes, his stated goal is thus an attempt which “presents kenotic Christology as one important modern attempt to articulate a theology of the Incarnation that comports with the Chalcedonian affirmation that Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human.”²² Next, Feenstra outlines and presents the essence of the view earlier advocated by Thomasius. Here he explains the concern that Thomasius had to maintain both natures for the incarnate Christ. Some interesting matters come to the fore and issues which Feenstra senses are of paramount importance include the question of whether the kenotic view described can do justice to the deity of Christ during the period of his earthly life.

The issue has reached an impasse according to Feenstra because there is simple disagreement on what constitutes the divine nature. Can the distinction that Thomasius made stand, or have the critics of kenotic thought won the day by including the so-called relative attributes as part of the divine nature, and therefore constitute them as essential to deity? Feenstra claims that those like Dorner, Baillie, and more recently, Pannenberg who have challenged kenotic exposition have not argued and therefore proved their view, but have merely asserted it. The matter, therefore, issues forth in a new proposal. As Feenstra ponders, “Perhaps the doctrine of the divine attributes must be revised in the light of the Incarnation.”²³ To proceed with this part of his essay, Feenstra decides to deal mainly with omniscience. This is regrettable since the doctrine of omnipresence is therefore neglected. Feenstra, however, notes:

Omnipresence can safely be eliminated from consideration both because there may be a sense of omnipresence according to which the kenotically incarnate Christ is

present docetism he feels is still evident. He prefers the approach like that of Pannenberg, which starts from below with the man Jesus.

¹⁹ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 31.

²⁰ Ibid. Berkouwer also mentioned F. W. Korff, who challenged kenotic Christology as precluding the actual coming of God into the world, which Korff [and Berkouwer] deem as the “secret of Christology” (Ibid., 30).

²¹ Ronald J. Feenstra, “Reconsidering Kenotic Christology,” 128-52, in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, ed. Feenstra and Plantinga.

²² Ibid., 128.

²³ Ibid., 135.

omnipresent and because omnipresence appears to be conceptually secondary to questions of God's knowledge and power.²⁴

It would be very helpful for an explanation to show *how* a “kenotically incarnate Christ is omnipresent.” Alas, Feenstra provides no such aid. He remains on his course to discuss the question of omniscience. The fact that Feenstra summarily dismisses omnipresence is deplorable, for he wants to show that it is really the attributes of knowledge and power that drive one to an avowed kenotic position. This is an incorrect procedure. One may not relativize omnipresence in such a manner. On the contrary, I believe it is the truth of Christ's omnipresence that precludes the very notion of a kenotically conceived Christ. If anything, it is Christ's omnipotence that can conceptually be thought of in a kenotic way by maintaining a distinction between possession and use. However, Feenstra's proposal is not sub-kenotic but fully kenotic. This is so for his understanding of omniscience. Feenstra does not subsume omnipresence under omniscience as others do, but just brushes it off with a concession that it may even be possible that a kenotically conceived Christ is in some way omnipresent. Nevertheless, he does not allow for omniscience. His discussion on this attribute of knowledge will suffice for now.

Feenstra now interacts with Stephen T. Davis and Thomas V. Morris.²⁵ Two key questions drive the discussion for Feenstra. The first asks whether true deity may be maintained of the incarnate Christ. The second question centers around the possibility of genuine humanity of the exalted Christ. The solution to the first question for Feenstra focuses on a possibility that each person within the Trinity may possess the attribute of “omniscient-unless-kenotically-and-redemptively-incarnate . . .” as essential to deity, yet once the Son, who has so become in the incarnation, it is “. . . no longer a live option for either the Father or the Holy Spirit to become incarnate in this way.”²⁶ In this model, therefore, there really is no rescinding of anything to preclude genuine deity, for the doctrine of omniscience is wedded to a carefully phrased caveat. This certainly begs the question of whether this is biblically justified. Along with Davis, Feenstra cannot conceive of a view which allows Jesus to be both omniscient [without the caveat] and at the same time be non-omniscient.

Feenstra's second issue attempts to deal with the objection to kenotic Christology that it necessarily entails the denial of the genuine humanity of Christ after the ascension. This is telling, for if it is necessary for a kenosis to occur, that is for the Son of God to actually give up certain attributes (e.g., omniscience) to become man, then a claim that Christ now

²⁴ Ibid. Certain matters trouble me as I reflect on some of Feenstra's discussion of Thomasius. Feenstra explains that Thomasius believed that after Jesus obeyed God he was once more taken into that glorious mode of existence and therefore re-possessed the relative attributes, including omniscience. This is not to say that the humanity is eliminated by Jesus as he enters again that mode of being that he enjoyed before the incarnation. This begs the question of why the incarnation necessitates an abandoning of these attributes in the first place. Furthermore, a more perplexing issue emerges as Feenstra asserts that Thomasius claimed that the relative attributes in fact are not intrinsically contradictory to true human existence. Moreover, regenerated Christians begin to experience partially the relative attributes themselves even now (see Feenstra, “Reconsidering Kenotic Christology,” 131-33). I cannot imagine how Christians “possess [omnipresence] to a limited extent.”

²⁵ Davis is an advocate of a kenotic Christology. Morris is critical of kenoticism.

²⁶ Feenstra, “Reconsidering,” 142.

possess omniscience must cast doubt on his genuine humanity. Feenstra grants the legitimacy of this objection. The significance of his admission to the weightiness of this challenge will be re-visited later. At this point we must note how Feenstra diffuses the contention against his model of the incarnation. Essentially he does this by positing a distinction between kenosis and incarnation. He maintains that one may assert that the incarnation was merely the Son of God becoming man [taking human nature, no doubt], whereas kenosis involves the assumption of self limitation in sharing our finiteness as part of the redemptive strategy of God. While this is significant and *prima facie* allows Feenstra to ward off suggestions that kenotic Christology cannot affirm the genuineness of Christ's humanity since the ascension, it does not aid any approach, kenotic or sub-kenotic which equates *kenosis* with the incarnation or at least makes the *kenosis* the *sine qua non* of incarnation.²⁷ Many questions emerge at this point which Feenstra recognizes: "Fortunately we need not answer all these questions at this time. The central point here is simply that kenotic Christology does not require Christ's loss of humanity as exalted. If Christ's being human continues even when his kenosis ceases, then his incarnation, or being human, and kenosis are conceptually distinct."²⁸ Feenstra makes this distinction and says that "the kenosis of the Son of God involves . . . his ceasing to possess certain attributes, such as omniscience," then continues, "[he] divests himself of these attributes, not in order to become *human* or to become *incarnate*, but in order to share our lot or condition during his life on earth."²⁹

Overall, the positive contribution of Feenstra's kenotic proposal is found in his admission that the sub-kenotic proposal cannot work with reference to omniscience. This is due to the way Feenstra defines omniscience. He asserts: "Omniscience is . . . the attribute of knowing every true proposition."³⁰ What is devastating for the sub-kenotic position is what follows. Feenstra continues:

So if a certain being, *S*, is omniscient, then the proposition, "*S* is omniscient," is true. Since *S*, being omniscient, knows every true proposition, *S* knows the proposition, "*S* is omniscient." Thus, if *S* is omniscient, then *S* must be aware of *S*'s omniscience. So if Christ was omniscient during his life on earth, then he knew he was. It therefore seems unreasonable to suggest that the incarnate Christ retained his omniscience, having merely given up his use or awareness of it.³¹

This argument forces Feenstra to embrace a fully kenotic explanation of the relative attributes as previously explained, rather than to adopt a modified form such as sub-kenotic approaches commonly found in evangelical theology.

²⁷ Moreover, what Feenstra assumes in this line of reasoning by making a distinction between incarnation and kenosis is very close to the view I develop concerning the correct understanding of Phil 2:5-8. The incarnate Christ is the subject of the action involving kenosis. Rather than equating kenosis with self-limitation as Feenstra does, however, I prefer the option of seeing this as a reference to the death of Christ.

²⁸ Feenstra, "Reconsidering," 149.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁰ Feenstra, "Reconsidering," 136.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Sub-Kenotic Theology

The main difference between kenotic and sub-kenotic approaches is the claim by adherents of the latter that the Son of God remained in possession of all the divine attributes after the incarnation. The kenosis, in this model, has primarily been developed along three similar yet distinct proposals.³² These sub-kenotic views are (1) the giving up of the *use* of relative divine attributes; (2) the giving up of *independent* use of relative divine attributes; and (3) the giving up of the “insignia of Majesty, the glories [and] the prerogatives of Deity.”³³ Of these three types it is the second that has become very prominent in evangelical Christological doctrine.³⁴ To these we now turn taking a look particularly at Millard Erickson and Gerald Hawthorne.

Millard J. Erickson

Millard J. Erickson is among the best-known contemporary evangelical theologians. His evangelical contribution to Christological thinking has been noticed in the wider academic community of theologians. In the July 1995 issue of the theological journal *Interpretation*, Erickson joined other scholars in contributing to Christological discussion in a volume emphasizing the resurgence of systematic theology. In point of fact, Millard Erickson’s first venture to develop a full scale treatment of one of the theological *loci*, after completing the first edition of his now famous *Christian Theology*,³⁵ was to write the important book *The Word*

³² As already mentioned, Wayne House is my primary source for this categorization and terminology. See also the helpful article Robert E. Picirilli, “He Emptied Himself,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 3, no. 1 (1969): 23-30. Picirilli lists five kenotic views and three sub-kenotic views. I am indebted to House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, 57, who brought my attention to this article. Though not completely compatible with the view advocated in this dissertation, Picirilli’s view does, however, sense the same kinds of problems that I have struggled with in both kenotic and sub-kenotic approaches. He is cautious to claim that he cannot solve the perennial Christological problem but offers suggestions to ponder. His basic contention is that the kenosis question is primarily to be understood as “. . . not in what he [Jesus] laid aside, but in what He took up” (Picirilli, “He Emptied Himself,” 29). This is helpful, as far as it goes, affirming incarnation by addition, but it still holds onto what I continue to contest, namely that kenosis is incarnation.

³³ Picirilli, “He Emptied Himself,” 25. This expression as Picirilli notes has its origin in Lightfoot’s famous commentary on Philippians. Both House and Picirilli feel that it is vague and meaningless.

³⁴ For example, one may consult the following: Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium Designed for the use of Theological Students*, 3 Vols. in 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1907), 701-706; John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ our Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 143-45; Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 228-29; Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, *Contours of Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 212-20; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 199-225; Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology: A Historical, Biblical, and Contemporary Survey and Review* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995), 81-84; and Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: Historical, Biblical, Systematic, Apologetic, Practical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 2:285-86 (Lewis and Demarest espouse a combination of views no. 2 and no. 3 mentioned above). The sub-kenotic view has been defended at length by Loring A. Prest, “The Disposition of the Divine Attributes of Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotence in the Incarnate Christ” (Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1984).

³⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology.³⁶ It is this latter book that shall be our basis for analyzing his Christological position.

Erickson says of his own approach, “the view we have been introducing is a species of *kenotic theology* . . .” (emphasis added).³⁷ There are two places where Erickson addresses omnipresence. First, in discussing “Divine Self-Limitation,” Erickson proposes that the incarnation is analogous to God’s entering into covenant to redeem his people, or analogous to God’s creation of the world. This strategy is significant for Erickson, as these examples show that God curtailed his freedom by becoming obligated in some way. This obligation for God is not a problem, however, Erickson maintains, as this was “freely chosen in the first place.”³⁸ The reasoning continues in this manner:

The incarnation can be thought of along those lines. While giving up the divine nature would be a surrender of deity, and even giving up certain attributes might well be, a voluntary decision to restrict the independent exercise of some divine attributes is not necessarily a forfeiture of deity. The limitations accepted in the incarnation are like those accepted in the promises and covenants made by God.³⁹

Given this framework, Erickson mentions omnipresence. He claims, “The divine ability to be everywhere (or omnipresence, as theologians prefer) was not lost by the Second Person of the Trinity.”⁴⁰ At this point the argument is subtle. Erickson continues, saying, “In that sense, what he was [as the Second Person of the Trinity prior to the Incarnation] did not diminish.”⁴¹ Yet, Erickson also posits, “He did, however, limit himself to exercising that power only in connection with restrictions imposed by a human body, which meant that he could be in only one physical location at a time.”⁴²

In his second mention of omnipresence, Erickson further suggests,

Omnipresence is the attribute where the necessity of limitation involved in the incarnation is perhaps clearest. As God, Jesus had the capability of being everywhere. Yet, for the period of his earthly incarnation, he limited himself to the restrictions in location which having a physical human body entailed. He had possessed the capability of active omnipresence: being pure spirit, he was not limited to any particular place and time. But as part of the decision to become incarnate, he also decided not to exercise that capability, or to make it latent, for a period of time.⁴³

Here we see clearly Erickson’s commitment to a Christology which claims that Jesus possessed divine [relative] attributes in a latent manner, choosing not to exercise them. His observations concerning the “problem” of omnipresence highlights that it is incorrect, as

³⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 551.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 549.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 561.

Ronald Feenstra attempted, to brush off omnipresence with hardly a second thought. At least Erickson attempts to deal with this significant attribute.

Gerald F. Hawthorne

Gerald F. Hawthorne is perhaps best known for his famous commentary on Paul's letter to the Philippians.⁴⁴ His exegesis in this commentary is in line with his explicit Christology found in his work on the person of Christ. Like Erickson, Hawthorne also classifies himself as embracing a form of kenotic Christology.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Hawthorne goes on record early in his book on Jesus to show his commitment to an incarnationalist perspective. He writes that "It is my studied opinion that the New Testament clearly teaches that the preexistent, eternal Son of God entered into history in the person of Jesus Christ and . . . this Jesus was, in the ancient words of Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 190), "by nature both God and man."⁴⁶ His second main presupposition, as can be gathered from the first, is Hawthorne's conviction about the Bible. He asserts: "I hold a high view of Scripture. . . . I affirm that the Bible, of which the New Testament is one part, is God's special revelation to people . . . it is trustworthy, authoritative, essential . . . and that it was inspired by the Spirit of God."⁴⁷ Hawthorne especially wants it noted that he, along with several other scholars, affirms that "Jesus was *truly* God, *fully* God, God undiminished by emptying himself of even a single attribute!"⁴⁸ "I refuse," Hawthorne stresses, "to say that in the incarnation the eternal Son of God gave up, surrendered, laid aside a single attribute belonging to deity, as if the attributes of God were like garments that could be taken off and hung up somewhere until needed again."⁴⁹ It is helpful to grasp Hawthorne's approach to the kenosis passage in Philippians 2:6-9, however, to appreciate his specific teaching on the incarnation. In summarizing his view, he says:

When Philippians 2:7 is looked at through this lens [of Chalcedonian Christology], one discovers that the expression, "emptied himself," does not say that he emptied himself of anything. Hence, one should not think that the phrase means that Christ discarded divine substances, essences or attributes. Quite the contrary. The series of participles immediately following the description of this event—"he emptied himself *by taking* the form of a slave, *by becoming* in the likeness of human beings, *by being found* in human form"—indicates quite emphatically, although paradoxically, that Christ's self-giving was accomplished by taking, that his self-emptying was achieved by becoming what he was not before, that his kenosis came about not by subtraction but by addition, that his κενωσις (an emptying) was in reality a πλερωσις (a filling).⁵⁰

It is clear that the way Hawthorne views Philippians 2 guides his conception of the incarnation. However, he also says, "Divine attributes, including those of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, are not to be thought of as being laid aside when the

⁴⁴ See Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1983).

⁴⁵ Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 207.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

eternal Son became human but rather thought of as becoming potential or latent within this incarnate One—present in Jesus in all their fullness, but no longer in exercise.”⁵¹ Again, the familiar distinction is noted here in Hawthorne. This approach has the merit of defending the genuineness of Jesus’ humanity. This is the programmatic rationale for Hawthorne’s endeavor.⁵² Specifically referring to the attribute of omnipresence, while speaking of the incarnate Christ and drawing attention to the scriptures, Hawthorne posits, “Certainly the man, Jesus of Nazareth, was confined to time and space, and thus he was not omnipresent—no opponent of *any form of kenotic theory* [emphasis added] would say that he was omnipresent.”⁵³

Athanasius of Alexandria (ca 300-373)

It is time to take a look at Athanasius of Alexandria and how his Christology emerges from within the famous Arian controversy. A short survey will help locate the Bishop’s specific Christological contribution within the context of the emerging Arian crisis.

Nicene Theology

Our survey will take a look at the Christology of Nicaea⁵⁴ and particularly that of Athanasius of Alexandria.⁵⁵ Despite the pious claims that “Athanasius was the champion at

⁵¹ Ibid., 208.

⁵² Ibid., 210-11. For example, Hawthorne says, “Only if one assumes that the divine attributes were potential rather than active does it seem possible to talk about a real incarnation. If the Logos enters time and space omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, his entrance is a theophany. He certainly is not a human being like us” (Ibid., 212).

⁵³ Ibid., 211. It is indeed possible to affirm that the Man, Jesus Christ is omnipresent, with the use of the concept *communicatio idiomatum* as has been done throughout the ages, while maintaining the denial that Jesus’ humanity is omnipresent in the same way. For example, the debate about these very matters between Theodore Beza and Jacob Andreae resulted in Beza, as summarized by Jill Raitt, claiming this very notion of the interchange of properties (*communicatio idiomatum*). She says, “The communication of properties of burning iron and even in the soul’s animation of the body cannot be taken as duplicates of the hypostatic union. In the similes, Beza explained, both elements are created; in the hypostatic union, a finite reality is united to an infinite being. Beza concluded that the two natures (*ousiae*) must be kept distinct but not separate in the person of Christ. There is one Christ, Beza argued, who possesses two wills and actualities (*energiae*), two realizations (*energemata*), but only one result (*apotelesma*) since the person is unique. This is the way to understand Athanasius and therefore to remain orthodox” (Jill Raitt, *The Colloquy of Montbéliard: Religion and Politics in the Sixteenth Century* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 114). Furthermore, Raitt, once again gleans the teaching of Beza, who “distinguished abstract and concrete predications. Thus one could say that Christ is omnipresent, omnipotent, or even that *the man Christ is omnipresent* [emphasis added] and omnipotent because such a concrete subject refers to the person. On the other hand, one may not say that the humanity is omnipresent and omnipotent because this would abolish the distinction between the human and the divine natures. So one can say God suffers, but only *kat’ allo* or according to the other nature, the possible human nature, possessed by the Person of Christ . . .” (Raitt, *Colloquy of Montbéliard* 121).

⁵⁴ Most important in evaluating the Christological attempts of the Nicene council is Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Mathias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1993), 110-114. For the history between Nicea (325) and Ephesus (431) with a theological focus, one should consult Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, vol. 8, ed. Richard S. Haugh, trans. Raymond Miller, Anne-Marie Döllinger-Labriolle, and Helmut Wilhelm Schmiedel (Vaduz, Liechtenstein:

Nicaea,” this was not the case.⁵⁶ Yet it is surely established that the orthodoxy that emerged from Nicaea was not only ardently defended by Athanasius, but that he had a part to play in its formulation.⁵⁷ Athanasius attended the famous council of 325 but was primarily an attendant and aid to his bishop Alexander. To begin this phase we must start with the so-called Arian crisis.

The Search for the Christian God

Richard Hanson has painstakingly documented the central issues surrounding what is now known as the Arian crisis.⁵⁸ The controversy began when a Presbyterian, Arius contested the eternity of the Son of God. This was a result of debating the meaning of Proverbs 8, which all participants at the time took to be a teaching about Christ.⁵⁹ This text became a virtual battle-ground. Athanasius later deals with it in *Contra Arianos* book II. The whole debate flared up with a disagreement between Arius and his Bishop Alexander. “Soon,” according to Clayton, “‘the Lord created me’ reverberated through every street and alleyway in Alexandria, and wherever else those sympathetic to Arius’ notions wished to prove that the Son was a creature.”⁶⁰

The way out of this difficulty for those wishing to maintain the eternity of the Son was to argue for divine generation.⁶¹ This was a theological idea going back to Origen and it finally became the orthodox understanding of the relations in the Trinity. Athanasius, himself goes

Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 136-93; and Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1983), 33-169.

⁵⁵ Two important studies in Greek need to be noted at this point. Constantine Karakoli, “η οικουμενική συνόδος της νικαίας κατά τον μεγαν αθανασιον” in *σπουδαστήριον ιστορικής θεολογίας πανπιστήμιον θεσσαλονίκης χαριστήριον είς τον καθηγητήν παναγιώτην κ. χρήστου*, ed. George Mantzarides, (Thessaloniki, 1967), 113-18; and Stylianos G. Papadopoulos, *αθανασιος ο μεγασ και η θεολογια της οικουμενικης συνόδου* (Athens, 1975). In this latter work especially, one notes how Athanasius dealt with the Christological matters in conjunction with the issue of the “Theology of Synod” for the church at large.

⁵⁶ See Alvyn Petterson, *Athanasius* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1995), 7.

⁵⁷ See Wolfgang A. Bienert, “The Significance of Athanasius of Alexandria for Nicene Orthodoxy,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 48, 3/4 (1981): 181-95. Bienert helpfully traces how Athanasius was dogged in his espousal of the Nicene formula in “[that he] stuck to the wording of Nicaea in a stiff and unmovable manner” (*ibid.*, 183).

⁵⁸ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988). This book is of inestimable value.

⁵⁹ On this whole matter of Prov 8, one should consult Allen L. Clayton, “The Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-Text: Athanasius of Alexandria’s Interpretation of Prov 8:22-30 in Conflict with the Arians” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1988).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶¹ Athanasius, however, was one of the few to settle on the opinion that Prov 8 taught about the incarnation of the Logos. In this he followed Marcellus of Ancyra. See Clayton, “The Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-Text,” 206-18 for Marcellus, and 255-93 for Athanasius. This is a fascinating study of the interaction of biblical interpretation, dogmatic formulation, and apologetic contention. Athanasius includes elements of incarnation and divine eternal generation in his exposition of Prov 8. “Athanasius’ first exegesis of Proverbs 8:22 ff,” as Clayton observes, “relates vv. 22 and 23 to the incarnation and vv. 25-30 to the pre-cosmic generation of the Son from the Father” (Clayton, “The Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-Text,” 274).

to lengths to sustain the eternal nature of all three persons in the divine Triad.⁶² The driving force was an approach, which necessitated a fully divine savior otherwise salvation was not guaranteed. An eternal Christ was thus required to provide eternal life. The debate reached a high point at the famous council of Nicaea (AD 325) but far from a solution, this was merely a slowing down of the theological merry-go-round so many more could jump on and join in the discussion.⁶³ Hanson's study, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, is particularly helpful in tracking the developments after Nicaea. The creed itself, which was finally adopted, does not deal with the two natures in a Christological manner per se, but it does address the nature of the Son as God.

The Nicene watchwords are ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, and ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ. As Christ is the same substance as the Father, he is fully God. From the issue concerning the relations within the Godhead, we must forego further investigation at this juncture to concentrate particularly on Christology. It was R. P. C. Hanson who has evaluated the specific issue of Christology according to the broader concerns of Arian theology. He says:

Arianism in all its forms assumed that the Incarnation was a dispensation on the part of God which necessitated a reduction or a lowering of God so that it had to be undertaken by a being who, though divine, was less than fully divine. The inferiority of the incarnate Logos to God the Father was necessary for an Incarnation to take place at all.⁶⁴

For "Arius, the Alexandrian Presbyter," in particular, notes Norris, "[his] public teaching after A.D. 318 occasioned the trinitarian and christological debates of the fourth century."⁶⁵ Norris is in agreement with Hanson's observation about the Arian commitment to the transcendence of God. "[Arius] was a firm believer not only in the unity of God," Norris states, "but also in a doctrine of divine transcendence which saw God's way of being as inconsistent with that of the created order."⁶⁶ When one examines the Nicene creed, it

⁶² See Roland Chia, "μία οὐσία τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις: St. Athanasius and the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity," *Jian Dao* 9 (1998): 27-48.; Petterson, *Athanasius*, 36-90; Thomas Torrance, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity According to St. Athanasius," in *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 7-19; Quasten, "The Theology of Athanasius," in *Patrology*, vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from Nicaea to Chalcedon*, (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, n.d.), 66-70; and especially Peter Widdicombe, "Athanasius and the Making of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 456-78.

⁶³ "It must be granted," Robert Wilken has noted, "that the trouble began with Arius and the varying responses to his teaching. To be sure, his doctrine had been condemned at Nicaea long before the time of Cyril and Nestorius, but this was only a prelude to the violent battle stretching across the fourth century" (Wilken, "Tradition, Exegesis and the Christological Controversies," in *Studies in Early Christianity*, vol. 9, *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Harrison [New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993], 143). Please note that pagination is from the volume in which this article is reprinted: 141-63.

⁶⁴ R. P. C. Hanson, "The Arian Doctrine of the Incarnation," in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments. Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies. September 5-10, 1983, Oxford, England*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation Ltd., 1985), 182. This essay is very helpful for all stages of Arian Christology.

⁶⁵ See Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

becomes evident that Christology needs to be discerned between the lines.⁶⁷ This was the beginning of a “scientific theology,” as Torrance puts it; its ablest defenders were Hilary in the West and Athanasius in the East.⁶⁸ To Athanasius we must now turn.

Athanasius of Alexandria’s Christology

Athanasius became bishop in 328.⁶⁹ Soon after he found himself in exile where he was afforded opportunity to write. *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione* probably emerged at this time between 335-37.⁷⁰ It is noted that no specific mention of the Arian crisis is found in these works.⁷¹ Later during his second exile, Athanasius begins his anti-Arian literature. These writings were probably intended for more mature theological students such as monks, but later became public records.⁷² However, there emerges a clear pastoral concern as Athanasius is seeking to keep Christians from embracing Arian theology, and he also seeks to win back those deceived by the Arian arguments. Athanasius writes on this false teaching “so that those who are distant from her might flee her, and those deceived by her might repent.” (*Contra Arianos* I,1).

The works *Orationes Contra Arianos* books I-III, are the most mature reflections by the Alexandrian bishop on the matter of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and therefore implicitly of a Christology that is grounded in Trinitarianism. The books consisting of *Contra Arianos* I-III were probably written, as Hanson says, “between 339 and 345, [and] perhaps [we can] envisag[e] their production as a fairly long-drawn-out process over that period.”⁷³ These discourses against the Arians include, albeit not in a systematic way, teaching on Christology proper.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁸ See Torrance, “The Relation of the Incarnation to Space in Nicene Theology,” in *Divine Meaning*, 343-73; and “The Nicene Theology of Athanasius and Hilary,” in Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 115-25.

⁶⁹ For a recent volume which attempts at filling an obvious void in comprehensive Athanasian studies, see the very well written and eminently documented book by Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1998). Christology is highlighted in the section “The Redeemed Relation between God and Creation as a Christological Problem,” 138-61.

⁷⁰ John Kaye, *Some Account of the Council of Nicaea in Connexion with the Life of Athanasius* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1853), follows the classical studies of Bernard de Montfaucon, the Father of Greek Paleography, in dating these two works to A.D. 318. This date is also posited by Archibald Robertson in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, NPNF 2, vol. 4 (New York: Christian Literature, 1892; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), lxiii. Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 418, opts for the later date [A.D. 335-336]. For a balanced treatment of this issue, see Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 26-30. Anatolios finally opts for a “fairly credible combination of [a] *terminus post quem* [335] and [a] *terminus ante quem* [328]” (Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence*, 27, 29).

⁷¹ On this see especially Richard J. Voyles, “The Fear of Death and a False Humanity as the Human Dilemma: The Argument of Influence in Athanasius’ Christology,” *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 8 (1989): 135-44. Voyles considers it a mistake to read *On the Incarnation* as an anti-Arian polemic.

⁷² See *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Ferguson, s.v. “Athanasius” by Charles Kannengiesser.

⁷³ Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 419. Anatolios suggests that the entire Anti-Arian polemic of Athanasius is to be dated “between the 340s and the early 370s, from the issue of the relation of the Son to the Father, to that of the relation of the Spirit to Father and Son, to Christological questions” (Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 93).

⁷⁴ See Craig Alan Blaising, “Athanasius of Alexandria: Studies in the Theological Contents and

Many of the concentrated studies on Athanasius' Christology center on the question of whether he affirmed a human soul for the man Jesus Christ. This will have to be treated briefly.⁷⁵ Alwyn Petterson has challenged a growing consensus concerning the infamous label of "spacesuit Christology," made popular by Richard Hanson.⁷⁶ Hanson argued that the incarnation was much like an astronaut putting on a spacesuit. What this would appear to mean is that Athanasius merely uses his "external" body just like a space traveler uses his "external suit." This is decidedly an attempt to read certain passages in Athanasius with modern sensibilities. Our modern predisposition to a more Antiochene type Christology, that emphasizes the genuine humanity is admitted by Frances Young, and would certainly characterize Hanson's own presuppositions that color his reading of Athanasius. Young, however, has at the same time given the Alexandrian tradition a fair hearing (unlike Hanson in my opinion), and concludes that "[t]he Alexandrian tradition insisted throughout that the Logos was the sole subject of the incarnate experiences; this alone could be called a real Incarnation of the Logos."⁷⁷ This was linked to the need for the Savior to be fully Divine and the sole actor in redemption. Young adds: "In spite of docetic tendencies in their attempts to do justice to this belief [the real Incarnation], the Alexandrines in fact, gave a

Structure of the 'Contra Arianos' with Special Reference to Method" (Ph.D. diss. University of Aberdeen, 1987). This dissertation is invaluable as a running commentary on the three books of Athanasius known as *Contra Arianos*. When Blaising discusses the "Christological" material in book three, he explains that the broader concern was clearly about the relationship of the Son with the Father, yet "[it] does not mean that it is illegitimate to attempt to discern Athanasius' Christology as much as possible in these [Book III:30-35] and the following sections" (ibid., 394-95).

It should be noted that there are actually four volumes or books entitled *Contra Arianos*. Among the foremost Athanasian scholars today there is difference of opinion regarding the genuineness of all four books. George Dragas and Thomas F. Torrance accept book four as genuine, whereas this is a minority view. Charles Kannengiesser, on the other hand, rejects book three as not part of the original composition of Athanasius. He sees *Contra Arianos* I and II as a compositional unity involving some redactional additions by Athanasius. He also holds book four as spurious. Many, including Blaising, accept book three as truly from Athanasius' pen. See Blaising, "Athanasius of Alexandria," 1-11.

The following studies are particularly helpful in assessing the Christological contribution of Athanasius: Grillmeier, *From the Apostolic age to Chalcedon*, 308-28 (especially 326-28); Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 284-89; Petterson, *Athanasius*, 109-35; George Dion Dragas, "ἐγένετο ἀνθρώπος" and "The Eternal Son," in *Athanasiana: Essays on the Theology of Saint Athanasius* (London, 1980), 9-73; Charles Twombly, "The Nature of Christ's Humanity: A Study in Athanasius," *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 8 (1989): 227-41; Richard J. Voyles, "The Fear of Death and a False Humanity as the Human Dilemma: The Argument of Influence in Athanasius' Christology," *PatByzR* 8 (1989): 135-44; Ellen T. Charry, "The Case for Concern: Athanasian Christology in Pastoral Perspective," *Modern Theology* 9 (1993): 265-83; Charles Kannengiesser, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology," *TS* 34 (1973): 103-13; and Chauncey R. Daley, "Christology of Athanasius of Alexandria" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954).

⁷⁵ On this issue Grillmeier and Quasten are the most thorough. Khaled Anatosios, "'The Body as Instrument': A Reevaluation of Athanasius' Logos-Sarx Christology," *Coptic Church Review* 18 (1997): 78-84, however, challenges Grillmeier's Logos-sarx framework and offers an admirable attempt at reading Athanasius without traditional prejudice.

⁷⁶ See Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 448. For a more balanced view, See Petterson, *Athanasius*, 109-117; and Frances M. Young, "A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22, no. 2 (April 1971): 103-114.

⁷⁷ Young, "Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology," 113.

better account of traditional Christian belief than the Antiochene school, which divided the natures and failed to expound their unity in the Incarnation.⁷⁸

Athanasius himself claimed that the body that was assumed by the logos was not ἄψυχον.⁷⁹ Furthermore, George Dragas has shown that the classification of Athanasius' though within a logos-flesh (*sarx*) framework must be questioned.⁸⁰ Dragas has conclusively shown that for Athanasius flesh (*sarx*) in essence means "man." In this study, Dragas conclusively treats Athanasius' Christology showing that the eternal Logos becomes "humanized" without ceasing to be divine. Furthermore Anatolios has masterfully discredited the traditional approach evident in Hanson, by showing conclusively that Athanasius' own arguments lead in another direction.⁸¹ It is a "model of predication," that Anatolios garners from the primary materials. This must lead us to investigate the "double account" teaching of Athanasius that he garnered from within the Biblical material.

Double Account of the Savior

Athanasius certainly held a view embracing two distinct but joined natures in one person, and therefore clearly anticipated Chalcedon. Petterson has demonstrated that Athanasius, in his anti-Arian polemics, shows what is proper to each nature nevertheless also retaining that the actions are performed by the one subject.⁸² This is particularly highlighted in *Contra Arianos* III. Scripture "contains as we have often said," repeats Athanasius, "a double account of the Savior."⁸³ It is here that Athanasius grounds his specific Christological

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 108. Though admittedly, this was later in Athanasius' career, after the Apollinarian controversy was well under way.

⁸⁰ See Dragas, *Athanasiana*, 9-32, especially 12-14, where Dragas puts much data in chart form.

⁸¹ "With regard to the subjectivity of the Incarnate Word," notes Anatolios, "it has become commonplace among modern commentators on Athanasius to say that, according to the Egyptian bishop, the divine Word is the sole subject of all the acts of Jesus Christ and the humanity of Christ is conceived as an instrument by which the Word acts. While it is indeed true that Athanasius speaks of Christ's humanity as an instrument, the interpretation of this concept within the framework of an agent—instrument model is *highly misleading* [emphasis supplied]. It is simply not the case that Athanasius relates the divinity and humanity of Christ in terms of subjectivity and instrumentality, with the implied extrincism of this model. Rather . . . it is typical of Athanasius' logic to refer the act back to the subject in the same way he refers will to being, and to the task of redemption to One who is adequate for the task

. . . . The important thing to see is that this commonality [the Word with our human nature] is expressed by Athanasius not primarily within the framework of an agent using an instrument that is "extrinsic" to that agent, but much more fundamentally within the framework of predicating the humanity of Christ to the divine Word." See Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of his Thought*, 140. This entire discussion (138-163) is masterful, and in my opinion settles the issue regarding Athanasius' Christology.

⁸² Petterson's comments acknowledge that some have read Athanasius too woodenly, yet he maintains that Athanasius is misunderstood in this way. See his discussion in *Athanasius*, 112-13.

⁸³ This translation is found in Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 87. In the Greek, the passage reads: Σκοπὸς τοίνυν οὗτος καὶ Χαρακτήρ τῆς ἁγίας Γραφῆς ὡς πολλάκις εἶπομεν διπλὴν εἶναι τὴν περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπαγγελίαν ἐν αὐτῇ: For the Greek text see *αθανασίου αλεξανδρίου του μεγαλου απαντα τα εργα 3, δογματικα β' ελληνοσ πατεροσ τησ εκκλησιασ 12 (θεσσαλονικη: πατερικαί εκδῶσεις, 1975), 94. Also J.-P. Migne, ed. PG 45: 385 A.*

methodology in the Scope of Scripture.⁸⁴ We must investigate this. While noting the possibility that Athanasius was not the author of the third oration, Clayton, nevertheless had this to say about 3.29: “Whether or not Athanasius was the author of the third oration, the above passage [cited above] *accurately reflects his concept of the skopos of scripture.* [emphasis added]”⁸⁵ Clayton also sees the exegetical value that Athanasius placed on the double account formula. He concludes:

Athanasius insisted that Scripture’s one *skopos* was a ‘double account of the savior,’ i.e., *skopos* was the means by which economic statements could be sorted out from the absolute ones. It is the ‘nature’ of Christ (pre-existent or incarnate) that gives meaning to the ‘terms’ of scripture. Discover the ‘person’ of a text and it can be interpreted correctly.⁸⁶

What becomes clear from Athanasius’ discussion is that there are two kinds of language describing the Son of God. These are linked to the two natures that constitute the person of Jesus Christ. Let us take another look at this important passage in a slightly lengthier context and draw out his main argument.

Now the scope and character of Holy Scripture, as we have often said, is this—it contains a double account of the Saviour; that He was ever God, and is the Son, being the Father’s Word and Radiance and Wisdom; and afterwards for us He took flesh of a Virgin, Mary Bearer of God, and was made man. And this scope is to be found throughout inspired Scripture, as the Lord Himself has said, “Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me.” But lest I should exceed in writing, by bringing together all the passages on the subject, let it suffice as a specimen, first John saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made not one thing;” next, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of one Only-begotten from the Father;” . . .⁸⁷

Athanasius goes on to explain:

Consequently, when the flesh was suffering, the Logos was not apart from it. That is why the suffering also is said to belong to him. When he was doing the works of the Father in a divine way, the flesh was not external to him. On the contrary, the Lord

⁸⁴ Hall has nicely captured the essence of this in his fine intro to Patristic hermeneutics. See, Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 56-64, esp. 62. For an insightful look at this concept in addition to other interpretive matters in Athanasius, see James D. Ernest, “Athanasius of Alexandria: The Scope of Scripture in Polemical and Pastoral Context,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993): 341-62. On the practice of Athanasius’ exegesis, see idem, “The Uses of Scripture in the Writings of Athanasius of Alexandria,” (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2000); for a *précis* of James Ernest’s argument in his dissertation I am dependent on his paper, presented at a North American Patristics Society conference meeting, entitled: “Athanasius as Exegete?” (Presented at Loyola University, Chicago, May 26, 2001).

⁸⁵ Clayton, “Orthodox Recovery of a Heretical Proof-Text,” 233.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁸⁷ St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters in NPNF 2, vol. 4, “Four Discourses Against the Arians”, 409 (Book III: 29).

did these things in the body itself . . . Thus, when it was necessary to raise up Peter's mother-in-law, who was suffering from a fever, it was a human act when he extended his hand but a divine act when he caused the disease to cease.⁸⁸

Athanasius leaves us with a maxim in *Contra Arianos* III. 35, when he states, "If we recognize what is proper and peculiar to each [acts according to specific nature], while at the same time perceiving and understanding that both sets of deeds come from one [agent], we believe rightly and shall never be led astray."⁸⁹ This observation shows the truth of Quasten's comment: "A . . . consequence of the personal unity of Christ is the *communicatio idiomatum*."⁹⁰

Within this exegetical procedure, Petterson has caught Athanasius' commitment to the omnipresence of Jesus. "The Logos transcends the body and the world of which it is a part," notes Petterson, "and consequently is not handicapped by it; and yet he is immanent in it, his transcendence not precluding his ubiquitous presence in the finite world."⁹¹ This approach to the incarnation was not new, however. Athanasius held to this concept in his earlier work *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*. "For He was not, as might be imagined," posits Athanasius, "circumscribed in the body, nor, while present in the body, was He absent elsewhere."⁹²

Commenting on this specific text from Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*, Torrance states, "A fundamental point here is that when the Word or Son of God became man, assumed from us a human body, and therefore shared our physical space, *he remained* what he ever was."⁹³ And in a note on this very matter, Torrance further shows the source and influence of this idea: "This was the point made by Origen [already demonstrated]," notes Torrance, "and was later taken up by the whole Church."⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Norris, *The Christological Controversy*, 90.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁹⁰ Quasten, *Golden age of Greek Patristic Literature*, 75.

⁹¹ Petterson, *Athanasius*, 110. Anatolios also grasps exceptionally well the paradoxical nature of Athanasius' statements that provide us with the raw data for exacting a Christology proper. In discussing the possibility / impassibility question, Anatolios posits "Paradoxical Christological statements of this kind [in Athanasius] can be dismissed as simply nonsensical and meaningless. While we will not attempt to 'explain away' the paradoxical element, what we can do is go beyond glib assertions that Athanasius simply does not take Christ's humanity seriously and try to see how such statements were intelligible for Athanasius himself." See Anatolios, *Athanasius: Coherence of his Thought*, 148. The answer according to Anatolios is to see that the whole "Christological" issue is grounded in the "logic of Redemption, . . . [where] seemingly contradictory statements ha[ve] to do with the asymmetrical and theological character of the unity of humanity and divinity in Christ" (*Ibid.*).

⁹² See Athanasius, "On the Incarnation of the Word," in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, NPNF 2, vol. 4 (New York: Christian Literature, 1892; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 45.

⁹³ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 366 (emphasis in original).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 93. The other concern Athanasius has, according to Torrance, is with regard to Christ as Mediator. Because of the distinction between creator and creature, the Logos makes it possible for the Father to dwell fully in the Son bodily because of the nature of the triune Godhead. The doctrine of *perichoresis*, interpenetration, or mutual indwelling, safeguards the distinction of persons while allowing their inseparable relations to be observed. Only the Logos made flesh, not a mere human, could serve as a mediator. See the brief but helpful discussion in Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 366-67. For an in-depth analysis of interpenetration (*perichoresis*), see Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 168-202. Torrance's comments in this latter work are significant, and they help to counter insufficient or incorrect notions of *perichoresis*.

This notion is also found in *Contra Arianos* I. 42, where we read: “Although he is the same one having become man and called Jesus, nonetheless he has all creation under his foot.”⁹⁵ What is evident in Athanasius is that the absolute transcendence of the Logos is what allows Jesus (the Logos made flesh) to remain unchanged in one very specific sense. Here the concept of Incarnation by addition is paramount.⁹⁶ What Athanasius sees as essential for the Logos is exemplary, indeed as Torrance claims, it has been adopted by the whole church. However, some modern evangelicals have embraced a very different Christology from that championed by Athanasius. To these we (re)turn in a concluding section.

Conclusion

The theological differences between the early church and modern forms of evangelicalism, I believe, are already very apparent. The evangelical Christological thinking that we have surveyed thus far is at odds with the approach of the Great Athanasius of Alexandria. Millard Erickson and Gerald Hawthorne are two evangelicals that have adopted a kenotic type of Christology. I will not rehearse all their arguments at this point, but I want to mention Erickson’s rational for denying omnipresence to Jesus. Something that, clearly, Athanasius could never embrace.

“Rather than suggest that God gave up certain attributes of divinity as well as certain attributes of humanity in becoming incarnate,” Erickson posits, “I prefer to emphasize that what he did in the incarnation was to add something to each nature, namely, the attributes of the other nature.”⁹⁷ Commenting on Philippians 2:7, Erickson states, “Thus, I would interpret the participle λαβών (“taking”) in Philippians 2:7 as an instrumental participle, so that it should be rendered, “He emptied himself *by taking* the form of a servant (emphasis added).”⁹⁸ In another place Erickson continues his reasoning, “May not the incarnation be a matter of divine self-limitation, freely chosen and appropriate to deity?” asks Erickson.⁹⁹ To bolster this approach, Erickson speaks of promises made by God, and he also mentions the Creation, which according to Erickson places limitation on God.¹⁰⁰ “The incarnation can be thought of along those lines,” Erickson argues. “While giving up the divine nature would be a surrender of deity,” he adds, “and even giving up certain of its attributes might well be, a

⁹⁵ This translation is taken from William G. Rusch, ed. and trans., *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Sources of Early Christian Thought, series ed. William G. Rusch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 106.

⁹⁶ “What has taken place,” Sellers observes, “is that He, the Logos who is eternal with the Father, has in these last days assumed flesh—but He is still the same person both before and after the Incarnation. Aaron is still Aaron, [Athanasius] says, after he had put on the high-priest’s vesture. Here, clearly, Athanasius is drawing near to the thought that the incarnate life of the Logos is an “addition to” the life which is His by nature” (Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies*, 35).

⁹⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 555.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* I find it interesting that Erickson argues this way. No doubt there is a point to his rationale. However, the Bible mentions creation not to speak of any limitation on God, but on the contrary to uphold the greatness of God. This appears to be God’s own use of the creation as *God’s own* work in his response to Job (Job 38-41; also see Isa 40:18-30).

voluntary decision to restrict the independent exercise of some attributes is not necessarily a forfeiture of deity.”¹⁰¹

Erickson is therefore crystal clear in terms of his belief in limitations for Jesus Christ. He says, “Omnipresence is the attribute where the necessity of limitation involved in the incarnation is clearest.” Erickson adds, “As God, Jesus had the capability of being everywhere.”¹⁰² To this, he includes the following poignant observation. Thus Erickson: “Yet, for the period of his earthly incarnation, he limited himself to the restrictions in location which having a physical human body entailed. He had possessed the capability of active omnipresence: being pure spirit, he was not limited to any particular place and time. But as part of the decision to become incarnate, he also decided not to exercise that capability, or to make it latent, for a period of time.”¹⁰³

I believe this manner of speaking concerning the specific attribute of omnipresence, as in Erickson’s proposal, is not tenable. It appears that with the use of expressions such as “What we are saying is that his basic powers were not lost, but only the ability to exercise them,” and “Jesus did not give up the qualities of God, but gave up the privilege of exercising them,”¹⁰⁴ is a valiant attempt to make a distinction between “‘nature’ and ‘conditions’ ” as Erickson claims, yet it cannot work with omnipresence. The simple fact is that omnipresence by definition is more than the ability to be everywhere; it is that one who is omnipresent *is* everywhere by necessity. A distinction that may be used with omnipotence, cannot be utilized with teaching about Christ’s presence in relation to the created order.¹⁰⁵ It must be conceded that Erickson’s examples illustrate the possibility of how omnipotence may be temporarily given up in the sense of use, but they do not aid his argument for the question of omnipresence. In Erickson’s exposition what is really being said is counter to his basic framework of distinguishing the possession of attributes with their use. For example, in saying that Christ is “no longer pure spirit,” Erickson evidently means that a divine contraction has taken place for the second person of the Trinity in the incarnation. Therefore, it is not the case that “*Who* he was” has not changed but merely what he does. The “Who” has undergone a metaphysical alteration in Erickson’s proposal not merely a metaphysical addition. It is here that Athanasius’ methodology is so badly needed.

What is evident in this kenotic approach is that Erickson attempts to use the truth of Christ’s humanity to become the filter for explaining the deity.¹⁰⁶ One is, therefore, forced to

¹⁰¹ Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 549.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 561.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 550.

¹⁰⁵ It is possible to envision an omnipresent God becoming not omnipresent, not by any change in the being of God, but by the extinction of the created order. This would render God the only being, and as such there would be “nowhere” for him to be present. That the Bible portrays God as determined to save his creation and not in any way ready to dispense with it, it is safe to say that he will always be omnipresent in regards to it as a created entity.

¹⁰⁶ Brown makes this point concerning the kenotic theology. “E. L. Mascall,” notes Brown, “has described kenoticism as a kind of inverted monophysitism: ‘Whereas the monophysitism of the Eutychians absorbed the human nature into the divine, that of the kenoticists absorbs the divine nature into the human’ ” (Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought 1778-1860* [Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1985], 254).

reconsider the biblical witness to the divine nature and somehow make it compatible with a truly human person.¹⁰⁷ It is this starting point of Erickson's endeavor, which places him in his self-defined characterization of advocating a kenotic type of Christology. As such it can legitimately be said that Erickson's understanding of Christ does not do full justice to the deity of Jesus, despite his claims. The rationale that God freely entered this state of affairs does not suffice to maintain the full deity of Jesus as it includes God [the Son] in becoming less than who he is prior to the incarnation. Erickson has attempted to argue for a view of the incarnation as a kenosis by addition, but as his statements have made explicitly clear, there is an inherent inability for Christ to be omnipresent during his earthly ministry. This problem is not encountered in Athanasius. Erickson explains his view in the following way: "He [God the Son] made a voluntary decision to limit the exercise of his omnipresence for a certain period of time. This is not to imply that he could have overridden the decision at any moment. He had willed that from approximately 4 B. C. to A. D. 29 he would not have the free use of his omnipresence. It was that he was pretending that he could not use it; *he really could not* [emphasis added]."¹⁰⁸

This language is clear in its expression of limitation. Recall the statement quoted earlier, which follows immediately upon this previous explanation, "What we are saying is that his basic powers were not lost, but *only the ability to exercise them*" (emphasis added). Erickson next says the same thing regarding omniscience, and then continues with an illustration of a softball game where parents were placed under a rule to bat left-handed so as to make the game fair for the children. The application to the incarnation is vivid in the subsequent explanation. "Now one's ability as a right-handed batter was not diminished," posits Erickson, "but it could not be exercised because of the requirement to bat from the left-handed-batters box. Although one was *still able to bat right-handed* (emphasis supplied), one was not allowed to in that particular game."¹⁰⁹ In his discussion, Erickson has claimed that in the incarnation Christ could not exercise omnipresence because His ability to do so was freely rescinded, yet at the same time based on this interesting illustration from the world of sports, that Christ was able to exercise omnipresence. There is a confusion that emerges in that Erickson cannot betray his evangelical insistence that Jesus of Nazareth is God, but also that this must also be a limited God somehow, if we are to make sense and affirm the full humanity of this very same Jesus.

Erickson finally heightens the problem, so to speak, rather than providing a satisfactory explanation. With a clear difference in meaning between omniscience and omnipresence it seems to follow that any talk of Jesus merely possessing omnipresence but not exercising it

¹⁰⁷ This is the case in Hawthorne's position as well. He claims: "The particular view of the Person of Christ . . . which seems most in harmony with the whole teaching of the New Testament is the view that, in becoming a human being, the Son of God willed to renounce the exercise of his divine powers, attributes, prerogatives, so that he might live fully within those limitations which inhere in being truly human" (Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus* [Dallas: Word, 1991], 208). Roger Helland, "The Hypostatic Union: How Did Jesus Function?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 65 (1993): 311-27, is another attempt to pursue this approach. Helland relies on Hawthorne in this article. Helland [and Hawthorne] has been ably refuted by David Parker, "Jesus Christ: Man of Faith, or Saving Son of God?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 67 (1995): 245-64.

¹⁰⁸ Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 549.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 550.

(voluntarily or otherwise) is nothing more than verbal sleight of hand. The very definition of the term omnipresence, if words mean anything, requires that Jesus not only possess, but also exercise or use it, which is conceptually necessitated by the definition. A return to the Christological methodology as seen in Athanasius is apparently the only way to do full justice to both types of statements in scripture; indeed, there is a “double account of the savior.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Henry P. Liddon is an able exponent of this approach as similarly found in Athanasius. See H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner, Welford, and Co., 1868), 440-500, esp. 453-79.

A TRADITION OF REDUCTIONISM AS A MATTER OF FACT: ALISDAIR MACINTYRE AND SAM HARRIS

C. Shawn Stahlman*

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre begins with the “disquieting suggestion” that we live in a world that is replete with the “survivals” of a collapsed and forgotten moral framework. This framework accepted authority and tradition and presupposed a teleological conception of the good, including the good of all human life. What humans set out to do and how they should do it matters and can only be judged good or bad in terms of the *telos* that is unique to being human. The *telos*, in the end, provides the possibility for evaluative deliberations and determinations to take place concerning the specific means to arrive at the good of human life. In other words, good and bad are not simply subjective states that are the product of personal preferences but are statements corresponding to ordered ends external to the individual. Such judgments, then, can be stated quite simply *as a matter of fact*. For the modern individual, according to MacIntyre, the opposite seems to hold true: “people now think, talk and act *as if* emotivism were true, no matter what their avowed theoretical standpoint may be.”¹ This leads to our using moral language without understanding why, in fact, any moral exhortation should or could have substantive force. Corresponding to the indeterminacy of moral assertions and the inability to articulate reasons that are persuasive to rivals “there is at least the appearance of a disquieting private arbitrariness. It is small wonder if we become defensive and therefore shrill.”² For MacIntyre, the “disastrous situation” that we find ourselves in is a result of the rejection of a teleological framework of the good.

The conceptual incommensurability and ostensibly interminable debates over moral issues is also a primary concern for author and neuroscientist Sam Harris in his book *The Moral Landscape*.³ Unlike MacIntyre, however, he finds the principal fault to lie in the erroneous conclusion by secular liberals that such “disquieting private arbitrariness” is an objective facet of the world that therefore does not admit of objective judgments. That is to say, Harris rejects the notion that terms like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are simply the linguistic veils covering subjective (and arbitrary) personal preferences (desires), and that since preferences cannot be said to be true or false, morality as such does not exist—there is no *finis ultimus* or *summum bonum*. While factual statements may be stated concerning the content of judgments, it is concluded by such liberals that facts cannot weigh in on the value of that content.⁴ According to Harris, the ostensibly intractable disputes over moral judgments of right and wrong have led people to relativist conclusions—to think that no answers in practice means no answers in principle. Such thinking is a “great source of moral confusion.”⁵ Furthermore,

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¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (IN: Uni. of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 22.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, (NY: Free Press, 2010).

⁴ For example: To say that person *x* reports that he likes activity *y* can be said to be a factual statement (unless the report by person *x* is intentionally deceptive). What could not be justifiably stated, it is supposed, is that it is a ‘fact’ that person *x* should (shouldn’t) like activity *y*. More will be said about this later and why this appears to be the case.

⁵ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 3. For Harris, such logic is fallacious and demonstrably so. For instance, it seems rather unobjectionable to say that there is a simple, finite answer to the question of

this conclusion is the result of a fallacious distinction between facts and values. It is not that we have no common conceptions of the good or that we do not have universally shared values (we do, Harris asserts), but rather it is because of an artificial and destructive distinction between facts and values that leaves us in a “disastrous situation” whereby otherwise intelligent people are labeled intolerant should they choose to pronounce on the immorality of a particular culture, tradition, or behavior.

As a consequence of such a distinction, science has generally been considered to be absolutely and necessarily divorced from the realm of values, which is understood to fall instead under the domain of religion. Scientific opinion has therefore been excluded from this domain and for many of its practitioners this seems logical, as they understand their work to be addressing *descriptions* of the world and not *valuations* of it. To illustrate his point in the opening chapter of his book, Harris gives the example of an Albanian custom of vendetta involving sanctioned retaliatory killing whereby a murder victim’s family can kill any male relative of the perpetrator. Harris asks the question of whether or not such a tradition is wrong, evil, or inferior to our own structures of justice. He then poses another question: “How could we ever say, as a matter of scientific fact, that one way of life is better, or more moral, than another?”⁶ The common perception is that how people live their lives and, consequently, what they consider moral or immoral, is conditioned culturally. Cultural relativism has thus combined with emotivism, preventing any judgments at all on the morals of other traditions and cultures—most of all scientific judgments. Harris notes that “Secular liberals...tend to imagine that no objective answers to moral questions exist....Multiculturalism, moral relativism, political correctness, tolerance even of *intolerance*—these are the familiar consequences of separating facts and values on the left.”⁷ Conservatives, on the other hand, believe that morals come out of a “whirlwind,” and liberals, having no objective standards, end up surrendering to conservative values with both hands. The permitting of such things as religiously motivated mutilation of body parts, suppression of women’s rights, etc. are allowed to continue in the name of civility and tolerance but always with the philosophical presupposition of relativism. According to Harris, this is “what happens when educated liberals think there is no universal foundation for human values.”⁸ Harris, quite contrarily, rejects the relativism of his liberal colleagues and posits that there are true answers to moral questions—and that science can guide us to such answers.

That science can and should render judgments on such matters is the purpose of Harris’ book. According to Harris, values are really just facts that pertain to human well-being and all that we know and can know about human well-being can be subjected to scientific scrutiny and encompassed by scientific knowledge. Questions that people normally associate

how many people on earth were bitten by mosquitoes in the last sixty seconds. Yet, no team of scientists would be able to provide an answer given the technical challenges involved. No one would therefore assert that ‘in principle’ there is no answer. For the same reason, Harris argues, to admit that due to the complexity of issues involved in a question over *value* that answers have not (and possibly cannot) been yielded practically is not at all the same as to say or logically required to be the case that there are no answers in principle to such questions.

⁶ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

with ‘value’ like meaning, morality, and life’s larger purposes “are really questions about the well-being of conscious creatures.”⁹ Indeed, Harris asserts that “facts...exhaust what we can reasonably mean by terms like ‘good’ and ‘evil.’”¹⁰ Furthermore, since Harris’ expertise is in neuroscience, he suggests that human well-being relates preeminently both to behaviors (generated by the mind) and their consequent effects on others (as experienced in the mind). The mind, however, falls under physical descriptions of the brain that consists in empirical facts. Well-being, then, falls under the purview of science. The explanatory force of facts, then, for Harris, go all the way down to the neuronal level which reverberates into the moral sphere. Rejecting both metaphysical sources of values (which Harris associates primarily with religious conceptions) and emotivist/relativist conclusions regarding values (which Harris associates with evolutionary accounts and secular liberal accounts), Harris states that his purpose is to persuade readers that both approaches are wrong. Instead, Harris posits that science offers an alternative approach that avoids the pitfalls of the two others and helps “cut a third path through this wilderness.”¹¹

Thus, Harris counters MacIntyre’s understanding of the contemporary situation by offering his own ‘disquieting suggestion,’ namely that science (and not religion or teleology) provides the key to morality.¹² Harris will argue for transcultural *values* on the basis of transcultural *facts* insofar as facts are equated with values. More than ‘warranted assertability,’ Harris is arguing for scientifically grounded claims concerning ‘timeless truths’ for morality. The concern of this paper in evaluating Harris’ thesis is to show that it rests on the validity of his claim to sidestep the consequences of his liberal, emotivist colleagues with whom he continually distances himself in order to fend off charges of relativism.¹³ His success or failure in this effort, however, is inextricably connected to his success in articulating his own argument concerning the relation of scientific facts to the well-being of sentient creatures. The assertion held here is that Harris ultimately fails in both endeavors for the following reasons: Harris’ argument is actually thoroughly ensconced in a particular tradition of

⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 46.

¹² The suggestion ends up being ‘disquieting’ to both those in the science professions who have always understood their work to be relegated to description and also disquieting to those who seek metaphysical sources for morality inasmuch as science appears as a threat to such sources. According to Harris, the latter’s suspicions are warranted because science and religion are diametrically opposed with regard to epistemology. Thus any cherished beliefs that emerged from a burning bush or tablets brought down from a mountain will be subsumed under and rejected by the rational scrutiny of science. While Harris asserts that he holds religion in general to be illusory and dangerous to well-being, his emphasis is primarily aimed at Christianity and Islam. For example, the subjugation and forced illiteracy of women under the Taliban is viewed as morally repulsive and *wrong*—and wrong from a scientific understanding of human well-being. The traditional wearing of burqas is particularly morally abhorrent to Harris as are liberals’ “contextual” legitimation of it. See Harris, 27.

¹³ One can understand Harris’ desire to preempt charges of relativism as it simply becomes incoherent and inconsistent to speak of “better,” “morally superior,” and “progress,” while surrendering to philosophical relativism on the other hand. This is also why Harris explicitly distances himself from evolutionary theory (while noting that its factual acceptance should be obligatory) noting that his account of morality is *not* an evolutionary account. MacIntyre must continually rebut charges of relativism as well—if only ‘practical relativism.’ MacIntyre does this successfully by outlining specific criteria whereby a tradition can be rationally shown to be demonstrably superior to a rival tradition.

rational inquiry, and Harris denies his heritage in such a way as to place himself outside of tradition altogether by relying on rationality as such. What Harris seems not to realize is that rationality as such has a heritage, a tradition that is inseparably bound to the liberal tradition with which he seeks to distance himself. The tradition of rational inquiry of which Harris is a part is none other than that doomed project of the Enlightenment that proves to be thematic for and the point against which MacIntyre defines his own views. Indeed, rationality as such, is according to MacIntyre a myth constructed during the Enlightenment and promulgated by its successors.

The sort of ‘facts’ to which Harris appeals also were fabrications of the Enlightenment. On the contrary, MacIntyre argues that rationality must and can only ever be understood within a particular tradition.¹⁴ Thus on the proceeding pages we will 1) consider the defining characteristic of this tradition, namely scientific *reductionism*, and how Harris fits squarely within this tradition, 2) articulate how Harris’ conception of ‘well-being’ and human flourishing collapses under the weight of so much successive reductionism and pushes his assertions no further than any of his Enlightenment predecessors (and contemporary liberals) and 3) offer some concluding thoughts regarding the tradition out of which Harris works and what would allow it to enter the domain of moral inquiry more productively.

The Tradition of Reductionism

As noted above, MacIntyre begins his *After Virtue* with a “disquieting suggestion,” which is to be found in the fact that despite *acting* “as if emotivism were true,” individuals in private and in public life carry on moral debates under the pretense of rationality. The fact, however, that these debates carry on in ostensibly interminable fashion betrays two dimensions of those who are engaged in the debate: 1) the falsity of the ideal of transcultural and transtemporal rationality to which those engaging in such debates appeal and the reality of the conceptual incommensurability from which they actually begin and 2) the moral language that exists as a ‘survival’ from a period where shared teleology allowed for moral judgment and resolution (i.e., the debates were not interminable). The moral ‘ought’ no longer has the force it once had behind it because that force relied on a shared set of values concerning an agreed upon common good, a shared *telos*. That *telos*, however, was rejected and has since been forgotten and replaced by the idea of individual autonomy buttressed by a notion of universal rationality. Thus, according to MacIntyre, we live in a dystopian world where we have the moral nomenclature but no longer the moral theory to make such nomenclature either comprehensible or persuasive. Similar to a ‘phantom limb,’ despite having been amputated from our conceptual framework, teleology still gives the illusion of its presence.

How did things get this way? MacIntyre’s overarching thesis is that blame lies in the intellectual history of Western Europe and primarily with the Enlightenment and its successors who attempted to construct a world free of martinet and arbitrary authority (i.e., religious institutions and their concomitant doctrinaire clericalism) as well as any source of authority whose ‘wisdom’ did not coincide with the discoveries of reason. Reason was seen as the virtue over against tradition and authority by which (and only by which) persons could discern the truth about the world and thus achieve genuine freedom through continual

¹⁴ While as noted as being thematic in all of MacIntyre’s work, such a contention regarding the particularity of rationality finds perhaps its clearest and most nuanced treatment in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1988).

progress. Nature in general, as well as human nature in particular, were thus placed under the scrutiny of reason and especially in the terms of and in a context where *scientific* accounts of the world were becoming the language of reason and, consequently, the only acceptable means to reliable knowledge. On MacIntyre's account, the scientific investigation of nature rejected teleology and subsequently explained it away.¹⁵ The methodology by which science was able to do this can be summed up in the term *reductionism*. Since the rejection of teleology during the Enlightenment was really a byproduct of scientific methodology, a consideration of reductionist methodology and presuppositions is warranted—especially since the argument being put forward in this paper is that methodological reductionism constitutes a tradition of rational inquiry that characterizes the scientific project as a whole and that Harris falls squarely within this tradition as does modern liberalism.¹⁶ Consequently, Harris' arguments are based on rationality 'as such' with the denial that this rationality could be refuted or argued to be invalid on the basis of embodying particular presuppositions (see footnote 8 below).

Reductionism, then, in science is quite simply a search for what is really going on—for what is 'really real.' Reductionism is 'what we do' when we do science. It is both a given in the act of explanation and a program of unity in scientific understanding. In other words, reductionism describes the overarching philosophy and methodology of scientific investigation. The process occurs through successive explanations of nature, which consist in isolated, empirical facts. Furthermore, science, by definition, is limited to a physicalist perspective of natural explanation.¹⁷ Harris certainly adopts this view and espouses it in his book, rejecting any notion of entelechy or soul or mind-body dualism, with emphasis on this last rejection. There is only one kind of 'stuff' that makes up the universe and that 'stuff' is physical, i.e., quantifiable.¹⁸ Therefore, inasmuch as science adheres to physicalism, the reductionism engaged in by the natural sciences will be physicalist. With this physicalist presupposition in mind, science is able to approach the world and everything in it with the assumption that, in principle, everything can be understood and explained. This is because

¹⁵ See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 33.

¹⁶ See Stuart Kauffman: "We have lived under the hegemony of the reductionistic scientific worldview since Galileo, Newton, and Laplace," in "Beyond Reductionism," *Zygon*, 903. It is this tradition that underpins and is presupposed by the modern liberalism MacIntyre vehemently rejects.

¹⁷ The physicalist view is itself a form of reductionism identified by William Uttal and Charles Jones as ontological reductionism (or substantive reductionism). In commenting on the theoretical and pretheoretical aspects of traditions MacIntyre makes the following observations: "From a standpoint outside that of any established scientific community, on the basis of data uncharacterized in terms of any established theory, there are and can be no sufficiently good reasons to suppose in respect of any particular subject matter or area of inquiry, let alone in respect of nature as such, that there is one true fundamental explanatory theory.... That there is a true theory to be found is a presupposition of the ongoing activity of the scientific community..." in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 134.

¹⁸ Cf. Rosenberg: "...modern science—and, of course, neuroscience—is committed to 'physicalism': the assumption that there is only one kind of stuff, substance, or thing in the universe, from matter, material substance, and physical objects, all the way down to quarks," in *Darwinian Reductionism: Or, How to Stop Worrying and Love Molecular Biology*, (Chic: Uni. Of Chic. Press, 2006), 2. Given the long-standing scientific and philosophical problems concerning the relationship between mind and body (mind/brain), neuroscience stands at the apex of the physicalist position, holding that mental phenomena correspond to specific and identifiable physical events in the brain—consequently, to quantifiable facts.

there is nothing that is outside of human observation such as supernatural or otherwise transcendent causes. All causes are physical and can thus be observed or at least are open to physical detection and description. By deconstructing an object of inquiry into its component parts, that object can be understood on more and more basic levels. Thus biology can be understood in terms of chemistry and chemistry in terms of physics and everything ultimately in terms of quantum mechanics. It is precisely this kind of reductionism in science that allows for a program of unity among the various, and sometimes ostensibly disparate, sciences (such as psychology and physics) whereby inter-theoretic reductions are made.¹⁹ Reductionism aims at simplifying the matter under consideration, identifying underlying unities if they exist, and providing a parsimonious explanation of cause and effect.

Carl Sagan's book *A Pale Blue Dot* provides perhaps the best narrative description of reductionism in science played out over approximately the last four hundred years.²⁰ Sagan refers to the effects of reductionism as the "great demotions" of humanity's self-conception. On Sagan's account, modern scientific thought began with Copernicus in the 16th century and while his voice was largely muted it managed to inculcate the idea of heliocentrism to other voices that would prove more effective and enduring. Such a voice came preeminently with Galileo and with his telescope where through empirical observation he was able to argue convincingly that Copernicus had been correct regarding the heliocentric view. Indeed, the heliocentric view was not a mathematical fiction but rather an astronomical reality. In a word, it was a 'fact.' For MacIntyre, it was precisely during this period of time that 'facts' were invented. He notes that "facts, like telescopes and wigs for gentlemen, were a seventeenth-century invention..."²¹ In modern versions of the correspondence theory of truth, according to MacIntyre, it is such facts that are taken to be that which corresponds to judgments. In other words, judgments correspond to facts.²² It is, of course, one thing to use the word 'fact' to state the content of a judgment but something quite different to use it to refer a "realm of facts independent of judgment."²³ For MacIntyre, the former is philosophically harmless while the latter is not and is "highly misleading."²⁴ It is not that

¹⁹ What such inter-theoretic reductions actually mean is a subject of debate. Ernest Nagel's classic understanding of reductionism was in terms of how a reducing theory could subsume and predict the laws of the reduced theory. Peter Brown argues that such reductions neither supercede nor replace the reduced theory. When questions of conceptual incommensurability arise, however, it does seem that there are some cases where alterations, revisions, and corrections simply *do* become replacements. Consider for instance the heliocentric theory with that of the Ptolemaic system; the former was not simply a correction but a replacement and more requiring a complete paradigm shift in how the solar system was to be understood. Cf. Peter Smith's article on the unity of science, "Modest Reductions and the Unity of Science," in *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism*, Ed. by David Charles and Kathleen Lennon. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 19-43.

²⁰ Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, (New York: Random House, 1994).

²¹ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 358.

²² This is precisely Harris' view where "differences of opinion...will be increasingly constrained by facts" and that truths discovered by science "will force us to draw clear distinctions between different ways of living in society with one another, judging some to be better or worse, *more or less true to the facts*, and more or less ethical," in *The Moral Landscape*, 2-3, *emphasis mine*.

²³ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 358.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 358. See also *After Virtue*, 59.

MacIntyre is here making a hard and fast distinction between facts and values, a mistake to avoid for which he and Harris would be in some agreement. Rather, the evaluative force that facts have is derived from a teleological framework and facts therefore lose meaning when that framework is discarded. Of course, the rejection of teleology is precisely what occurs during the scientific advancements and during and after the Enlightenment. What remains are facts that will be used both descriptively and prescriptively by those who will seek to articulate an ethical theory without the philosophical baggage of theology and philosophy (i.e., by discarding teleology).

Galileo's telescope and the 'facts' it discovered proved to be an irritation to both the Church and philosophical views which had held for millennia that the celestial spheres were unimpeded by change or corruption but rather circled the earth in perfect reverence.²⁵ By the end of Sagan's recounting the numerous scientific discoveries and concomitant debunkings of human myths, the reader has been reminded that the earth is not the center of the universe, that the sun is not the center of the universe, the earth is not special in the category of planets, our solar system is not the only such system with planets, and our galaxy is not unique. Humanity neither enjoys a privileged place in time nor a "privileged frame of reference" of motion in the universe (being thirty-thousand light years from the center of our galaxy), nor, necessarily, a privileged position among life on planet earth (thus, it is not even "ours" in the sense of possession). In Sagan's own words, "We could not have known beforehand that the evidence would be, so repeatedly and thoroughly, incompatible with the proposition that human beings are at center stage in the universe."²⁶ Thus the truth about humanity that science discovered came at a price. Sagan notes that we have been "burdened under the cumulative weight of successive debunkings of our conceits."²⁷ Stuart Kauffman makes a similar observation noting, "We secular humanists have paid an unspoken price for our firm sense that (reductionist) science tells us what is real."²⁸

While the Great Demotions described by Carl Sagan were humbling, the reductionist program that is guided by a physicalist imperialism could not simply be satisfied with cosmological reductions, but, quite by definition, must investigate reality to its smallest constituent parts. For the human, this means molecular biology and eventually to descriptions of brain states over against mental states, where "one can think of oneself...without having to use the first person at any point" or whereby "the category of 'person' could be eliminated in principle from our inventory of reality."²⁹ Darwin's

²⁵ See Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot*, 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁸ Stuart Kauffman, "Beyond Reductionism: Reinventing the Sacred," *Zygon*, vol. 42, no. 4 (December 2007), 906. He says further: For all the successes of science, from Newtonian mechanics to Relativity, from biology and chemistry to physics and quantum mechanics, "reductionism...has...left us in a world of...cold fact with no scientific place for value."²⁸

²⁹ See John Campbell, "The Reductionist View of the Self," in *Reduction, Explanation, and Realism*, ed. by David Charles and Kathleen Lennon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 383; also Richard H. Jones, *Reductionism: Analysis and the Fullness of Reality*. London: Associated University Press, 2000), 76. Also, Rosenberg notes that many "reject reductionism as the latest and most threatening version of the theory of natural selection's banishment of purpose, intelligence, and meaning from the universe and its history," in Rosenberg, *Darwinian Reductionism*, 9. See also J. Baillie, *Problems in Personal Identity*, (NY: Paragon House, 1993), 7.

articulation of natural selection as a mechanism of evolutionary development and diversification of life provided a “natural explanation of how such complexity could originate” and as such constitutes a sufficient explanation without remainder, including any teleological categories, conceptual or ontological.³⁰ There is no ‘fixed plan’ so to speak, and teleological explanations are not the same as functional explanations because the former entails design and purpose while the latter “becomes essentially redundant...” and “...we are left with a *description* of a certain sort of causal system.”³¹ This teleological deconstruction that is the by-product of thoroughgoing physicalist reductionism leaves humans in the ethereal position of being a “fluke of no significance.”³² J.H. Brooke succinctly states the predicament: “If animal instincts had developed into human reason, religion was a ‘lie,’ morality was ‘moonshine,’ humanity had lost its special status, and all distinction between moral and physical laws was ‘annulled.’”³³ The biological (and ultimately physics) principles driving that evolution entails no processes that are not physical, for any such notions of “divine sparks” or “entelechies” were “extirpated from science soon after the beginning of the last century....The only biologists who deny physicalism are an assortment of cranks and creationists to whom serious science pays no heed.”³⁴

Not even the mind, by which the *self* is ostensibly irreducible, is a safe haven from reductionism’s reach, and this is precisely the juncture at which Harris’ own field of work in neuroscience and the arguments put forward in his book come to the fore. Where the last bastion of human dignity and meaning might be sought in the teleology by which we give to ourselves and to nature, we find instead a physical description of various brain states whereby human “intendings and willings” are “simply a product of blind physical forces,”

³⁰ See also Gavin Flood regarding evolution and the development of what appears to be goal directed behavior in, “Asceticism and the Hopeful Self: Subjectivity, Reductionism, and Modernity,” *Cross Currents* 57 (2008), 481-497.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79. Commenting further, Flood notes: “The behavior which gets functionally explained may not happen regularly, but provided it has an evolutionary history in which one can see that it was selected for because it behaved a certain way (even if only rarely), then that behavior can be functionally explained,” (79).

³² Jones, *Reductionism*, 353. See also Palmyre Oomen on the self as a “longing” and the notion of teleology in “On Brain, Soul, Self, and Freedom: An Essay in Bridging neuroscience and Faith.” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 38 (2003), 377-392.

³³ JH Brooke, “Science and the Self,” 256. Further, Brooke adds, “It is widely recognized that the natural sciences, and evolutionary theory in particular, have challenged the biblical idea of our being created in the image of God....How else might we characterize Darwin’s challenge to human self-perception?” 254. On this account we can also see why Harris attempts repeatedly to distance his position from evolutionary adaptation and asserts on a number of occasions that his is not an evolutionary account of morality, which goes beyond any “narrow Darwinian calculus,” 13.

³⁴ Rosenberg, *Darwinian Reductionism*, 4. Indeed, Rosenberg thinks the physicalist worldview will be vindicated if its successes since the 17th century are any indication. He notes that “Ever since then, more and more phenomena—physical, chemical, and, apparently, biological—have been shown to be ‘nothing but’ matter in motion” (Rosenberg, 2). See also Renzo Morchio, a biophysicist, concerning why reductionism is engaged in the field of biology, especially as it relates to “vitalistic opinions” in “Reductionism in Biology,” in *The Problem of Reductionism in Science*, ed. Evandro Agazzi, (MA: Kluwer Academic Pub., 1991), 149-159. That Harris shares this view of “cranks” is made explicit in his attacks on “creation science” and Harris Collins and argues that their opinions not only do not matter but should not be permitted in the discussion of scientific inquiry.

and as such, *actions* are “merely the product of those same blind forces.”³⁵ Restricted by the physicalist account of reality, “the only causal factors deterministic or probabilistic-for the occurrence of a physical event are themselves physical.”³⁶ If thinking, or consciousness, is ultimately about brain states, neural processes constitute such states, “which is about cellular mechanics, which reduced to chemistry, which is really just about the physics of particles in motion.”³⁷ In other words, when we talk about the consciousness, “we are summarizing the effects of massive numbers of lower level relations.”³⁸ Mental activity *is* physical activity and that physical activity can ultimately be reduced to quantum mechanics.³⁹ In terms of probabilistic outcomes and in light of a Darwinian worldview the mental states of the brain might possibly be seen as vying “with each other to be the one that momentarily irrupts into consciousness.”⁴⁰ Those irruptions are *random* inasmuch as their expression is dependent upon contingent circumstances, circumstances that are themselves random.⁴¹ Meaning in our actions is reduced, teleology becomes an epiphenomenal illusion, and the self is once again left with a world of meaninglessness. If such a scientific view of the world is true, such a view “is utterly devastating to our ordinary understanding of ourselves.”⁴²

Such is to be expected, however, and Harris’ own views are quite in accord with this “utterly devastating” recognition of the facts of science. Our common sense intuitions had been wrong in understanding humanity’s place in the cosmos, the result of “an unlucky coincidence between everyday appearances of our secret hopes.”⁴³ This same “unlucky coincidence” seems to be the case as well regarding the ‘self,’ notions of free will, and our actions and intentions. Thus the self has not been able to evade the reductionist

³⁵ Nancy Murphy, “Physicalism Without Reductionism: Toward a Scientifically, Philosophically, and Theologically Sound Portrait of Human Nature,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 34 (1999), 555-556. See also Jones, *Reductionism* “...We are the accidental realization of random physical events. The world is void of purpose and meaning. All value...comes from us and not from any reality independent of us,” 353.

³⁶ Leonard Angel, “Universal Self Consciousness Mysticism and the Physical Completeness Principle,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, no. 55, (2004), 1, regarding the “Physical Causal Completeness Principle.” See also Judith Kovach, “The Body as the Ground of religion, Science, and Self,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 37 (2002), 945. See also J Baillie on this in *Problems in Personal Identity*, 7.

³⁷ Frank E. Budenholzer, “Some Comments on the Problem of Reductionism in Contemporary Physical Science,” *Zygon*, vol. 38, (March 2003), 66.

³⁸ Angel, “Universal Self Consciousness,” 5.

³⁹ Jones provides an example of this *is* or “type-type” identification. In terms of an explanation of heat thermodynamics reduced to statistical mechanics; heat is the result of the random collision of particulars, of molecular motion. However, it would be superfluous to say that heat is *caused* by molecular motion; heat *is* molecular motion. In the same way, mental activity *is* physical activity. See Jones, *Reductionism*, 13.

⁴⁰ J.H. Brooke, “Science and the Self,” 270. Cp. Leon Turner’s concept of the “plural self” in *Theology, Psychology, and the Plural Self*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Lmt., 2008). Turner relies on psychological models of the self to support his assertion that the plural self is *natural*. A treatment by Turner regarding Brooke’s comments would prove interesting.

⁴¹ Random here does not mean uncaused, but rather simply unknown and not the result of design or *intention*.

⁴² Murphy, “Physicalism Without Reductionism,” 556.

⁴³ Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot*, 18. See also Brooke, regarding the concept of altruistic behavior in evolutionary models, 266; also Murphy, “Physicalism Without Reductionism.”

deconstruction, especially when the notion of 'self' is understood to be strictly a function of mental states occurring in the brain. However, given the complexity and ostensibly independent components of the brain revealed by neuroscience, it seems implausible that there is any unified self that could "stand as rider to the horse."⁴⁴ The self, even in terms of memory, however, is only an "experiencing self." Memories are experienced moment to moment and are simply a "mode" of the "experiencing self."⁴⁵

The self, then, appears to be as illusory as the notion of human freedom. However, if there is no self as such, there certainly is no freedom to produce actions. Indeed, according to Harris, behavior can always be traced to biological events in the brain about which we have no conscious knowledge.⁴⁶ Despite this fact individuals continue to have the erroneous experience of being the authors of their own actions and thoughts, such a role or agency "cannot be reconciled with what we know about the human brain."⁴⁷ Experience shows us that other people often know what we are thinking before we do through visual cues and body language. In Harris' own studies using brain imaging technology, he found that brain activity which was related to specific decisions made by test subjects were detectable up to ten seconds before the subjects themselves became conscious of their decisions. For Harris, "The truth seems inescapable: I, as the subject of my experience, cannot know what I will next think or do until a thought or intention arises; and thoughts and intentions are caused by physical events and mental stirrings of which I am not aware."⁴⁸ As a result, "you are no more responsible for the next thing you think (and therefore *do*) than you are for the fact that you were born into this world."⁴⁹

This understanding of the self and human freedom is by no means an innovation or contemporary development furnished by neuroscience but is one with a long line of scientific inquiry that Harris admits has always been an inevitable conclusion of similar inquiries.⁵⁰ The burgeoning development of what would become the social sciences during the Enlightenment took the reductionistic framework of scientific inquiry as the purest form of rationality and subsequently applied it not simply to the laws of planetary motion and tides, but to humans as well. Suffering a kind of "math envy" in relation to the natural sciences, the pioneers of the social sciences sought a description of human nature as

⁴⁴ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 159. Kovach also notes, "Much has been made of the imperceptibility of the self. Indeed, many have argued that our inability to locate within the body anything that might be called a self demonstrates the illusoriness of the very concept of selfhood." See Judith Kovach, "The Body as the Ground of religion, Science, and Self," 250.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁶ Harris notes that "the moment we do pay attention, we begin to see that free will is nowhere to be found, and our subjectivity is perfectly compatible with this truth" (Harris, 112).

⁴⁷ Harris, 102.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 103. Even for those who argue that random firings or even quantum uncertainty give rise to 'self-generated' patterned (i.e. not caused by external stimuli) provide a basis for free will. This offers cold comfort according to Harris: "But 'self-generated' in this sense means only that these events originate in the brain. The same can be said for the brain states of a chicken." See also, Don Cupitt, *Creation Out of Nothing*, "That noble thing they call the human mind is just language itself, teeming and seething inside our poor brains," and "Look into your own thoughts, and what do you find there but an ant-heap of part-formed sentences scurrying about in the semi-darkness," 37.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

mathematically precise as those wrought by the natural sciences.⁵¹ Jones notes that such “sciences of man” were seen as being enveloped in the overall unity of science program (and still are conceived of as such today) where eventually “history, political science, economics, sociology, and any other social-level science will be reduced to psychology, which in turn will be reduced to *neurobiology* and chemistry.”⁵² With regard to morality and its relation to human well-being, Harris cannot but help understand the “primacy of neuroscience” as constituting the *sine qua non* of moral truth.⁵³ Harris, then, fits squarely within this scientific tradition of reductionism. The effort during the Enlightenment to produce a moral framework divorced from metaphysical presuppositions on the basis of rationality alone thus found its validation and justification in the successes of the natural sciences. Bernard Fontenelle (1657-1757) and Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), as well as others, would treat human nature and social institutions (especially religion) explicitly on scientific grounds in order to articulate laws governing human behavior since many of the sources of conflict were perceived to be (and were) religious in nature. The same seems to be the case today and is certainly understood as such by Harris.

The success of the natural sciences provided inspiration and hope for those who sought a rational approach to morality and to put an end to seemingly intractable disputes over right and wrong, steeped as they were in unnecessary metaphysical dogma. Given the scientific paradigm for discerning factual truths about the world (of which humans were a natural part) it seemed only logical that differences would eventually be resolved and dissolved on the basis of underlying lawful behavior.⁵⁴ That is, the diversity of moral opinions when subjected to scientific investigation would undoubtedly and inevitably reveal the common ideals and goods to which all humans aspire and to which all humans implicitly agree because such ideals and goods were rooted in human nature. Thus ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ would be understood as relating to factual assertions about the natural world—it was just a matter of translatability and it just so happened that scientific rationality was the Rosetta stone for which humanity had long been waiting. That this is precisely Harris’ view is pointed up on numerous occasions in references to the common good and globalized or universal values to which he aspires and that concerns over values and morality, regardless of cultural differences, can ultimately be reduced to and translated into concerns over the well-being of conscious beings, which falls under the domain of scientific facts.⁵⁵ Such a view, however, is on MacIntyre’s account the dominant characteristic of cosmopolitan modernity—“the confident belief that all cultural phenomena must be potentially translucent to understanding, that all texts must be capable of being translated into the language of which

⁵¹ See Horst, 36. See also Uttal, “To link the mathematical theory to the physical world requires other assumptions, premises, and linking hypotheses about which the mathematics says nothing,” in *Toward a New Behaviorism: The Case Against Perceptual Reductionism* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998), 11.

⁵² Jones, *Reductionism*, 205, *emphasis* mine.

⁵³ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 8.

⁵⁴ That such a project by the social sciences has for the most part been a complete failure is argued in detail by MacIntyre in Chapter 8 of *After Virtue*.

⁵⁵ See Harris, for example, 2, 7, 31, 33, 45, 46. Harris notes that “whatever can be known about maximizing the well-being of conscious creatures—which is, I will argue, the only thing we can reasonably value—must at some point translate into facts about brains and their interaction with the world at large,” 11.

the adherents of modernity speak to each other.⁵⁶ Modern liberalism with its ideal of reason divorced from metaphysics believes itself able to render the ostensibly unintelligible into the intelligible language of modernity.⁵⁷ Such an ideal, however, is never more than just that—an *ideal*, like ‘facts,’ it is a fiction produced during the Enlightenment and prompted by the successes of the natural sciences. According to MacIntyre such ideals failed and continue to fail to provide either an adequate account of what actually constitutes the good life or the ability to assert progress without falling into self-contradiction.⁵⁸ Hobbes, Spinoza, Kant and the Utilitarians are quintessential examples of such attempts to translate the reductionistic methodology of ‘fact-finding’ for the natural sciences into the language used by the social sciences. Harris, it may be added, is heir to this tradition as well.

Continuing the Tradition: Reductionism to Well-Being⁵⁹

Inspired by the scientific method and the tools of mathematical precision and consequent objectivity of the results arrived at, Hobbes sought a geometric-like extrapolation of the laws of nature that would serve to govern human interaction. Hobbes “wished to lay bare the notions of right, justice, sovereignty, and power. He finds a non-Aristotelian model for his inquiries in Euclid’s *Elements*” as well as in the physical science of Galileo.⁶⁰ As noted above, such a desire was fostered in the wake of rival claims of right and wrong and different ways of arguing for what constitutes ‘just’ and ‘unjust,’ (not to mention a civil war) as well as in the wake of the efficacy of the natural sciences. Hobbes’ approach was to dissolve the conflict by reducing the terms—a sort of semantic collapse or grammatical reductionism. MacIntyre describes his method thus: “The method is that of resolving any complex situation into its logically primitive, simple elements and then using the simple elements to show how the complex situation could be reconstructed”; in a word, reductionism.⁶¹ The definitions he proposes stand in the place of facts from which corollaries may be derived about the nature of human valuations. In this way a variety of value judgments may be cancelled out by showing the singular fact to which they are equivalent, namely power. Human nature, on the other hand, provides the concrete facts from which actual laws, concerning what can be said to be a ‘right’ and human interaction in general, can be postulated. The result is a moral geometry where the shape of the contingent facts reveals reason-based conclusions regarding the best form of human interaction; for Hobbes this is a monarchy. Hobbes proceeds from an ‘is’ to an ‘ought’ by saying that the ‘ought’ is really only a cleverly disguised or otherwise misunderstood ‘is.’

Concerning power, Hobbes distinguishes between *natural* and *instrumental* where natural power has to do with those powers of a person, though accidental, are there by nature (or, rather, not by choice or acquisition), such as physical strength, keen intelligence, or

⁵⁶ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 327.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁵⁸ MacIntyre notes: “So the project of constructing a moral teleology that has been evacuated of its metaphysical content by the erasure of the notion of an end turns out to be an incoherent project” in *Intractable Disputes on the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham, IN: Uni. of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 50.

⁵⁹ Also “Flourishing.”

⁶⁰ MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (IN: Uni. Notre Dame Press, 1966, 1998), 130.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

nobility.⁶² Instrumental powers, on the other hand, are those powers that are acquired by means of the first, such as “riches, reputation, friends...”⁶³ Furthermore, the worth or value of an individual is related to the amount of power they possess: the worth of a person equals the power of that person (little power equals little worth).⁶⁴ The worth of the person is not absolute, but determined by original and instrumental power. The value of a person is therefore relative depending on any number of contingencies, but is primarily determined by the esteem of others: “And as in other things, so in men, not the seller, but the buyer determines the price.”⁶⁵ This is not to say that individuals do not see themselves as, indeed, quite priceless, as Hobbes notes that most people esteem their value very highly. True value, according to Hobbes, however, is not so determined.

Hobbes’ assertions about power, then, constitutes a theory about human language and moral utterance and motives. We see certain things as honorable because they belong to someone with power and dishonorable because they belong to someone without power. “The power of a man...is in his present means, to obtain some future good.”⁶⁶ My esteem of another’s power is only such because that power can be power (instrumentally) used to obtain some future good for myself, such as the preservation of my own life. In this sense, Hobbes can be understood as adhering to consequentialist (or Utilitarian) logic. The use of such terms as honorable and dishonorable, worth and value, and justice and injustice are relative terms whose positive or negative significations correspond directly to the power possessed (or perceived to be possessed/or not possessed) by the holder of such qualities. Hobbes’ main point here is to show that moral utterances in reality correspond to *facts* of power, rather than to *ideals* to which we are to aspire. There is no honor or value as such but only honor and value associated with power, and insofar as power is a relative condition so too are honor and value. Hobbes’ conception of human language and motive, therefore, puts a very low ceiling on what can be asserted about moral ideas—most assertions simply being the masks concealing desires for power and domination. What has been undermined, if not overturned, is the classical understanding of value, which presupposes the notion of purpose or teleology. Hobbes’ dependence on reason divorced from and as a rejection of teleological explanations thus continues a tradition of inquiry characterized by scientific rationality.

The similarities of Harris’ own approach is unsurprising given the argument of this paper that his methodology is one with the Enlightenment’s project to develop a moral framework divorced from teleology. The kind of moral geometry that Hobbes sought to formulate resonates with Harris’ own depiction of the ‘moral landscape,’ which consists in peaks and valleys that themselves correspond to distinct physical states of human well-being. In place of ‘power,’ however, Harris substitutes ‘well-being,’ which seems to parallel Hobbes’ conception of ‘commodious living’ and falls short of establishing a secure ethical framework for the same reasons. Like Hobbes, in reducing everything to facts as he conceives them. Harris “is leaving himself with a universe composed only of concrete individuals, words, and

⁶² Nobility is, of course, not some genetic disposition, but is (or can be) a “natural power” insofar as such nobility is one’s by birth or if such title bestowing nobility is given by the sovereign, either of which presupposes a commonwealth where such titles have value (Hobbes, 52).

⁶³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc. 1651, 2004), 51.

⁶⁴ Hobbes notes, “The power of a man...is in his present means, to obtain some future good,” 51.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

the bodies which they signify.⁶⁷ There is no value as such or ultimate good; there is no justice as such either. As Harris notes, “The only thing wrong with injustice is that it is, on some level, actually or potentially bad for people.”⁶⁸ Like Hobbes, Harris own articulation of value is strictly consequentialist. Thus, what matters are those facts of life which pertain to securing and sustaining the preservation of life and, to whatever extent possible, a life marked by peace (i.e., ‘commodious living’).

Hobbes’ theory of language commits him to understanding desires as individual; all words are names of real objects (or collections of objects): “Hence all objects of desire must be individual.”⁶⁹ Additionally, like Hobbes’ limited conception of motives/desires (fear of death for not bending to authority, fear of sanctions such deploys, etc.), Harris’ conception of motives and desires as relating to and described only in terms of physical states of the brain puts a low ceiling on what can be prescribed in his ethical framework precisely because it is too vague and, consequently, such a “limited conception of motives, desires, and activity insures that most of the substance of human life goes unmentioned.”⁷⁰ Both Hobbes and Harris fall victim to the same criticism: What ought one to aim for in this life once secured from the threat of death? Like Hobbes’ ‘commodious living,’ Harris’ ‘well-being’ is too nebulous a concept to yield practical results, especially since both Hobbes and Harris explicitly reject a human *telos* (*finis ultimus* or *summum bonum*). Facts cannot do the work that either Hobbes or Harris want them to do. Much like the thoughts that follow one after another described by Harris, “It follows that, inevitably, our desires are for one individual object after another...and thus desires cannot include the desire for a certain kind of life, the desire that our desires should be of a certain kind,” but this is precisely what Harris does in his book.⁷¹

According to MacIntyre, facts could also not do the work that either Spinoza or Kant had wished for them to do. For both accepted certain scientific and mathematical principles as givens as they did to some extent morality—especially Kant. For both Spinoza and Kant the conclusions drawn from the axioms of their deductive systems are true insofar as no rational person could deny them without relinquishing the concept of rationality altogether (so they thought). Spinoza, MacIntyre asserts, “wants his propositions to have the content of factual truths, but to be guaranteed in the way in which the propositions of logic and mathematics are guaranteed.”⁷² Such wishes prove incompatible, however, “because their truth excludes some possible states of affairs from being actual” while the ‘facts’ that were the product of Enlightenment rationality produce ‘truths’ that are utterly circular since to “say that they are true is simply to say that they are framed in accordance with the appropriate rules.”⁷³ Kant, too, does not seek to vindicate philosophical starting points with regard to morality, but to understand what must be the case to make morality as it exists

⁶⁷ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 130.

⁶⁸ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 80.

⁶⁹ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 139.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 143.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 143.

possible. Thus Kant “is among those philosophers who see their task as one of *post eventum* analysis; science is what it is, morality is what it is, and there’s an end’ on’t.”⁷⁴

Harris admits that his argument “is an argument made on first principles. As such it doesn’t rest on any specific empirical results.”⁷⁵ Thus, Harris, too, is one who sees his task as one of *post eventum* analysis. This becomes especially evident in his discussion on evolution and his emphasis that his argument for morality is *not* an evolutionary account of morality. Like Kant, he recognizes that morals must be, to some extent, “independent of how the world goes, for how the world goes is nonmoral.”⁷⁶ Therefore, a science of morality is always and *must* always be a *post eventum* analysis in the world of the conscious being: We have evolved and we are what we are: moral creatures. For Harris this means that we are creatures who are and should be concerned with human well-being, a term that can be reduced to brain-states. Such a line of reasoning is difficult to sustain, however, because at the point of *post eventum* analysis, such analysis by definition must be selective about the ‘facts’ that are allowed to count as important or meaningful.⁷⁷ Were we to accept Harris’ notion of well-being which is as clear and concise as Hobbes’ ‘commodious living,’ the science of morality that might be derived would be open to the same criticism MacIntyre lodged against Kant, namely that while “the doctrine of the categorical imperative provides me with a test for rejecting proposed maxims...it does not tell me whence I am to derive the maxim which first provided the need for a test.”⁷⁸

The resulting science of morality, then, cannot avoid being simply another brand of utilitarianism, albeit couched in the sophisticated, fact-based vocabulary of neuroscience. Regarding Godwin and Bentham, MacIntyre noted that “society is nothing but a collection of individuals; for both, the good of individuals is a matter of their happiness; for both, that happiness can be summed and calculated.”⁷⁹ This is the case for Harris as well except that now pleasure and pain correspond to empirical facts about the brain. Pleasure is no longer *simply* a subjective state of mind, but a subjective state of mind corresponding to empirically verifiable states of the brain that are described in terms of chemical levels (e.g., vasopressin or oxytocin).⁸⁰

While pleasure or pain can be described in terms of objective facts according to Harris, this does not rule out that what constitutes pleasure and pain for people will vary over the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 191.

⁷⁵ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 189.

⁷⁶ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 191.

⁷⁷ See Harris, for example, 2, 11.

⁷⁸ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 197.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 232.

⁸⁰ See Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 29-31. Furthermore, it is primarily the pain and pleasure of “sentient” or “conscious” being with whom are the proper subjects of valorization. However, emphasis on conscious creatures puts a low ceiling on his ethical framework; that when moral evaluations are, in fact, put forward for non sentient creatures it is always in terms of suffering (i.e. physical pain) betrays the utilitarian principles at work in Harris’ own work. Harris makes an evaluative jump between nonsentient and sentient beings where pain is the operative principle defining good for the former but where the nebulous ‘well-being’ becomes the operative principle for the latter—a principle that inexplicably takes on much broader implications than only physical pain or pleasure and thus transcends simple subjective preferences.

moral landscape. As a consequence, there can be multiple and sometimes incompatible facts that nonetheless lead to human well-being.⁸¹ Harris uses the example of food stating that while there can be a variety of good foods (both nutritionally conducive to health and valued for taste), such variety does not lead to an inability to pronounce that some foods are poisonous (i.e., bad). Likewise, the terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’ when concerning human behavior (including individual acts to how society’s are structured) relate to empirically verifiable facts concerning the conditions that relate to human well-being. Again, however, if our only criterion is not to kill ourselves (i.e., poison will surely kill us), what else is there go guide us to happiness other than subjective preferences or utilitarian ethics. If it is the former Harris proceeds no further than his emotivist rivals from whom he wishes to distance himself. If it is the latter he falls prey to the same critiques against utilitarian ethics mentioned earlier by MacIntyre. When it comes to specific moral questions involving life and death the Hobbesian relative worth of the person is not far off. The difference now, however, is that worth is not judged on the basis of power but on the potential of that particular person for increasing the total well-being of others.⁸² Making such an assertion explicit in his argument reveals the utilitarianism that really presupposes the philosophical standpoint from which Harris is arguing.⁸³ However, as MacIntyre has noted, while utilitarianism is presented “under the pretext of offering a criterion, among other things, for distinguishing good and evil, it is in fact offering us a revision of those concepts, such that if we accepted it, we could allow that no action, however vile, was evil in itself or prohibited as such. For all actions are to be assessed in terms of their consequences...”⁸⁴ As noted earlier, Harris asserts that “The only thing wrong with injustice is that it is, on some level, actually or potentially bad for people.”⁸⁵

In both cases (either emotivist or utilitarian), neither provides satisfactory criteria of the good, but rather the good is presupposed. In other words, while the analogy of poison to health is employed, the actual practice goes much further. Harris would seek to rule out certain kinds of life styles and behaviors as detrimental to human flourishing—even when those forms of life or behaviors most certainly do not lead to death (like a poison) and can only be expressed in terms of impeding a *certain kind* of lifestyle. But who chooses the latter, which can only be expressed in terms of ‘human well-being’? For Harris, human well-being is not defined in terms simply of avoiding a poison that will kill you but in positive terms of that which will move one to reach fulfillment, to reach one’s purpose in life—terms Harris has no problem employing in his descriptions of morality.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, for example, 2, 7.

⁸² In a sense, then, this “potential to increase well-being” for others ends up not being so far from Hobbes’ conception after all if the only thing that Harris’ conception of well-being can establish is a minimum conception of morality whereby peace is secured and people are not in fear of being killed.

⁸³ See, for example, Harris’ comments regarding the moral obligation to rescue intelligent hostages before “slow-witted ones.” He notes, “Wrestling with such questions has convinced many people that morality does not obey the simple laws of arithmetic....However, such puzzles merely suggest that certain moral questions could be difficult or impossible to answer in practice; they do not suggest that morality depends upon something other than the consequences of our actions and intentions,” 72. In endnote 8 (to chapter 1) Harris asks the following: “Are all human lives equivalent?” and replies “No,” 199.

⁸⁴ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 241.

⁸⁵ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 80.

‘Fulfillment,’ however, is a subjective experience and the mistake Harris makes is forcing a particular brain-state to correspond directly to fulfillment thereby rendering judgment possible on the basis of whether or not a particular brain-state is or is not present. Even here, however, Harris cannot follow through with his own logic as he argues that just as people can be in error regarding facts of nature, they can also be in error regarding facts about morality (i.e., about their well-being).⁸⁶ Harris is acutely aware that “concepts like ‘pleasure’ and ‘happiness’ are stretched and extended in all directions until they are used simply to name whatever men aim at” and thus “become useless for evaluative and moral purposes.”⁸⁷ Therefore Harris is attempting to avoid that emotivist trap by arguing that simply because a brain-state might make one feel happy, the behaviors leading to such a brain-state are not necessarily morally good/right—and this on the basis of what is conducive to human well-being. MacIntyre notes that just because “men are happy with their lot never entails that their lot is what it ought to be.”⁸⁸ Harris is in complete agreement with MacIntyre on this point, but his reasons for agreement cannot be expressed in any coherent way because Harris’ argument, while acknowledging the malleability of human beings, fails to further recognize that “they can be conditioned in a variety of ways into the acceptance of, and satisfaction with, almost anything.”⁸⁹

The problem arises again, then, for Harris that the facts of brain-states cannot do the work that he has assigned to them. Consequently, Harris quietly slides into assertions about human well-being in relation to brain-states without articulating the intermediary steps. He does precisely what Hume criticized and while Harris completely discounts Hume’s own treatment of facts and values, it is not necessarily true that Hume was making an assertion that no ‘ought’ can be derived from an ‘is’ but simply that people conveniently do so without providing adequate grounding for the transition. If this interpretation of Hume’s criticism is accurate, then Harris is guilty *even* if his thesis that facts and values are not distinct and mutually exclusive realities.

As a result, Harris ends up making statements that an individual who is ‘happy’ (resulting from a particular brain state) might, in fact, be in error about what *should* make him happy. Presumably what should make the person happy, though, is Harris’ concept of ‘well-being’ which corresponds to specific brain-states which reflect feelings of happiness and/or factual conditions corresponding to not being killed. In the case of the latter Harris’ reasoning is completely circular and cannot extricate him from what he himself refers to as a ‘vicious cycle’ and produces the moral ought he wants to make. Consequently, only a minimal conception of well-being can be established (i.e., sustaining life, and perhaps even making life thrive) but cannot do the work of proving specific criteria for adjudicating what kinds of life and behaviors ought to be engaged in with the exception of those that prove directly hostile toward life (in a biological sense) itself. A slave could be well treated and well fed, allowed to have a family and even sustain familial bonds and by this definition would be thriving biologically and even, to an extent, socially. Harris, however, will not argue such a

⁸⁶ Commenting on the morals espoused by the Taliban Harris notes, “whatever they think they want out of life...they simply do not understand how much better life would be for them if they had different priorities,” 37.

⁸⁷ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 236.

⁸⁸ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 237.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 237.

case because the kinds of human flourishing he has in mind presuppose the good of individual autonomy—and this in a modern liberal sense, including freedom of choice of what to do and where to go and when (and this at the minimal level precludes the institution of slavery).

Furthermore, for Harris the good life must include things like creativity, art, and culture, which then require education and certain kinds of life conducive to creativity, art, culture—the purpose of which is to further human well-being in terms of flourishing. This argument, however, cannot be sustained because creativity, art, etc. have come to characterize human flourishing for Harris, something that does not and cannot follow from biological well-being and corresponding and reducible brain-states related to happiness and pleasure. What Harris is incapable of doing is demonstrating why creativity, art, etc. (and all the notions of the modern individual fulfillment) *should* define human flourishing when other things (like a drug) could provide the same brain-state effect and affect. Harris has slipped from biological flourishing to conceptual flourishing. While it is true that conceptual flourishing can lead to some biological flourishing (such as vitamins or a heart defibrillator), once those levels have reached maximal potential (a person could live 500 years or even be immortal), much of what characterizes human life is left out of the picture. Whether my life expectancy is 75 years or 1000, Harris' concept of well-being is too vague to provide a coherent framework for deliberation over what human beings should value and strive for that moves beyond mere preferences. The picture of well-being and human flourishing that we end up with is, interestingly enough, the modern western individual. Thus, while initially rejecting any overriding teleological theory of the good, of a *finis ultimus*, Harris does embody such a theory.⁹⁰ Any time such a theory is put forward, however, the concepts of 'well-being' and human flourishing where a human *telos* is rejected inevitably collapses under the weight of so much successive reductionism and pushes its claims no further than any other previous attempts espousing that Enlightenment fiction or universal rationality and translatability and facts independent of culture.

Conclusion

In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre develops an understanding of modernity in terms of the “tradition of liberalism.” This tradition has attempted (and still attempts) to transcend the problems inherent to the particularities of locally-informed traditions and the resulting rival and often apparently incompatible claims by assuming that all such claims are, in reality, only incompatible on the surface. In other words, modern liberalism assumes that there is such a thing as a tradition-independent, neutral standpoint from which to judge traditions that have been the cause of ceaseless debate. Such a neutral standpoint from which one can make judgments is based on facts provided by scientific judgment, a tradition of rationality inquiry that developed primarily during the Enlightenment and whose success imposed a hegemony of methodological reductionism on both the natural and social sciences. The modern consequence of this hegemony is the “confident belief that all cultural phenomena must be potentially translucent to understanding, that all texts must be capable of being translated into the language which the adherents of modernity speak to each other,” and modern liberalism with its inherited reductionistic framework for understanding the

⁹⁰ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 345.

world fancies itself the Rosetta stone of cultures, able to translate the unintelligible into the intelligible language of modernity.⁹¹ While Harris purports to reject liberalism on the basis of its relativism, he embodies its tradition of believing in universal translatability based on the ideal of universal rationality, an ideal which is the fiction produced by the social sciences' adoption of the natural science's methodological reductionism. The social sciences themselves, however, cannot be blamed completely since the inevitable reductionism by the natural sciences slowly erodes any independence that the social sciences might have claimed for themselves. Thus sociology and psychology ultimately reduce to neurological phenomena and empirical facts, "but," as MacIntyre notes, "once the notion of essential human purposes or functions disappears from morality, it begins to appear implausible to treat moral judgments as factual statements."⁹² The evacuation of teleology and metaphysics is, however, just what Harris sets out to do, but the "project of constructing a moral teleology that has been evacuated of its metaphysical content by the erasure of the notion of an end turns out to be an incoherent project."⁹³ Unsurprisingly, this goal places Harris in a long line of successors to and bearers of Enlightenment fictions (and incoherence). MacIntyre notes that this tradition "is best understood, not at all as an attempt to find a rationality independent of tradition, but as itself the articulation of an historically developed and developing set of social institutions and forms of activity, that is, as the voice of a tradition."⁹⁴

Just as the project to establish such ideals of rationalism independent of and over against tradition-bound and otherwise puritanical notions of and approaches to truth, so too does Harris project fail inasmuch as it is dependent upon and directly descended from such fictions and, consequently, embodies the same mistakes. As noted earlier, MacIntyre notes that "while initially rejecting the claims of any overriding theory of the good, does in fact come to embody just such a theory. Moreover, liberalism can provide no compelling arguments in favor of its conception of the human good except by appeal to premises which collectively already presuppose that theory."⁹⁵ This, of course, is precisely what Harris does, and while using the norms of scientific (i.e., rational) inquiry to establish moral facts, such norms are used to "covertly...define the greatest happiness."⁹⁶ What we end up with is that the only reason that is reasonable is *liberal secular reasoning* and the only values to be accepted must be *liberal secular values*.

The *individual* is always at the center of this in his ability to use the sophisticated resources of his rationality that allow him to see beyond the biases and confusions that result from traditional dogma. This approach, according to MacIntyre, is entirely wrongheaded because the opposite ends up being true. Believing itself to be above and outside of tradition, this rationalist approach loses all hope of progressing when it (and the internal standards used to judge its adequacy) fails to adequately address real-world moral dilemmas, which are at least in part due to the even greater blindness of not recognizing the tradition out of which its own form of rationality emerges. This is certainly true for Harris, and while his assertion that

⁹¹ Ibid., 327, 385.

⁹² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 59.

⁹³ MacIntyre in *Intractable Disputes*, 50.

⁹⁴ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*, 345.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 345.

⁹⁶ MacIntyre, *A Short History*, 238.

no answers in practice does not necessarily mean that there are no answers in principle has some validity, such an assertion cannot merely substitute for rational inquiry or directly equate with a factual assertions that a particular problem does have an answer.

Like his Enlightenment predecessors (and heirs to this project), Harris is seeking an end to rivalry and unceasing disputes over moral questions. A certain kind of conflict, however, is an essential ingredient to rational debate. Conflict is not simply a symptom of his “disquieting suggesting,” but vital to progress because it is in conflict that the question of human ends come up, that “the account of the human end initially comes to our attention, not directly but indirectly, at first in the form of practical disagreement.”⁹⁷ MacIntyre notes that “what rationality requires is that we deliberate further with others about how such disagreement should be resolved, including among those others with whom we most deeply disagree.”⁹⁸ The modern liberal tradition, however, is at odds with commitment to this kind of conflict, but this is precisely the end-game that Harris is arguing for—ending conflict by *a priori* ruling other opinions as not counting on the presupposition that his reasoning stems from independent facts and universal rationality that is not dependent upon cultural or religious biases. MacIntyre argues that current philosophical debate in moral inquiry must address the continuing inability of post-Enlightenment moral philosophy to reconcile its Enlightenment affirmation of the authority of reason with its inability to find sufficient rational grounds for accepting some version of Kantianism rather than some version of utilitarianism or...perhaps for rejecting all versions of both.”⁹⁹ Rejecting relativism and emotivism outright, Harris’ task is the same, but it is a task he fails to address and instead simply accepts utilitarian consequentialism that conveniently embodies modern liberal ideals of freedom. This utilitarian ethic is grounded in the pretense of ‘fact’ and Kant’s categorical imperative that is accessible to all rational persons and is now discerned through scientific inquiry and categorical imperatives that correspond to chemical states in the brain.

For MacIntyre, such approaches that stem from and embody the tradition of liberalism are sterile and cannot provide a way out of current epistemological crises out of their own resources. There is no conduit for self-criticism, “for putting liberalism into question.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, by ruling out the conflicting opinions of others who do not subscribe to scientific rationality when he needs to look to other alien traditions of which are currently, perhaps, untranslatable, he is not merely ‘taking a stand,’ but is constraining and consigning his tradition to rational stagnation. One of the problems, however, is in this very recognition of what rational inquiry requires. The steps to moving beyond the fiction of tradition-independent inquiry is by first recognizing the fallaciousness of a tradition-independent inquiry and MacIntyre suggests, surprisingly, that this may only be possible by something akin to a conversion (as opposed to reasoned inquiry); that is, conversion from the mire of modern liberalism to that of one *in some* tradition. To know *this*, is to know how to begin, which MacIntyre agrees with Descartes is, perhaps, to accomplish the most difficult task of

⁹⁷ MacIntyre in *Intractable Disputes*, 15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 392.

all.”¹⁰¹ Where Harris, begins, unfortunately, is from a tradition of reductionism *as a matter of fact*, a matter of fact whose self-evidence precludes further deliberation.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 403.

FACETS OF FAITH/TRUST IN PAULINE THOUGHT

J. Lyle Story*

The writer stumbled upon a website, which appears to offer a sure-fire test for determining religious faith and orthodoxy:

Even if YOU don't know what faith you are, Belief-O-Matic™ knows. Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and Belief-O-Matic™ will tell you what religion (if any) you practice...or ought to consider practicing.

Warning: Belief-O-Matic™ assumes no legal liability for the ultimate fate of your soul.¹

Other similar tests promise that upon satisfactory completion of a set of propositional questions, participants can discover what “brand” of Christianity to which they belong. The offered test reveals a faith in various propositions, with the implication that propositional faith provides the clue for determining religion, orthodoxy and even denominational commitment. However, propositions alone guarantee nothing; Christian faith lies in a personal God who invites people to make a deeply personal commitment to Christ Jesus in a holistic manner, e.g., the Jesus-event is not only true (propositional) but true for me (personal).

In Western church-life and television, faith is often treated in reductionist formulas and categories:

- Have the God-kind of faith.
- The sinner’s prayer.
- Particular wording of the sinner’s prayer.
- Going forward at an altar-call.
- Mental assent to various creeds in a new-members class or communicant class.
- The means by which Christian believers can make God provide for an easy and prosperous life, understood as “the abundant life.”
- A propositional commitment to a particular brand of prophetic teaching, usually offered by TV evangelists on a Sunday evening—hawking their wares.
- A guaranteed life-insurance policy so that one can go to heaven and escape hell, with little instruction concerning the meaning of life in the present.
- Joining “our” church.
- Being baptized.

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¹ <http://www.beliefnet.com/Entertainment/Quizzes/BeliefOMatic.aspx>

The list could go on and on and on.

By way of contrast to such reductionistic thinking, Paul expresses a full-orbed understanding of what faith/trust means and what faith/trust does not mean. It is important to note the various facets of what faith means for Paul. The frequency of the word “faith” and its cognates in Paul’s letters testifies to their importance. Paul uses the noun “faith” (πίστις) 142 times, the verb “believe” (πιστεύω) 54 times, and the adjective “faithful” (πιστός) 33 times.

What does faith mean in Pauline theology? Over the years of interpretation numerous suggestions have been made that generally fall within two extremes. On the one hand, faith can be commercialized and trivialized, wherein salvation can be purchased with the currency of faith. With a business-mentality, faith turns into another work, which enables one to “merit” salvation. The implication is that the doctrine of justification by works has been brought back in a new form. Instead of several good deeds and works, which a person can hold up to God for merit, there is only one work, faith, i.e., faith in one’s faith. The business or transactional approach leads to a strong Arminian position.

On the other hand, faith can be mechanized and then mass-produced with limited personal involvement of people. Faith is then regarded as part of the divine process of justification in which all human initiative is excluded (an ultra-Calvinistic position). It is no longer a personal trusting response but a predestined moment. People are like bottles or receptors that are filled with the water of life. As Leander Keck notes, salvation then becomes mechanical and Jesus becomes the founder of a system turning out justified robots by mass production.²

Paul’s central message expresses the vital value of *faith*, which lies at the very core of the salvation experience.

Rom. 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of *everyone who believes*: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

17 For in the gospel the righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness from *faith* unto *faith*, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by *faith*.”

In these two verses, the verb *to believe* or the noun *faith* occur four times. Faith encompasses the beginning, process and goal of the salvation experience; “The righteous will live by faith,” or “he who through faith is declared righteous, will live.” In essence, faith is a human response to divine revelation; it involves both the recognition by people that they are unable by themselves to receive the forgiveness of sins and that God has provided salvation through Jesus’ death for them. The affirmation of faith’s importance is also underscored in:

Gal. 2:16 yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but *through faith in Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because *by works of the law shall no one be justified*.

²Leander E. Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 52.

The experience of trust lies at the core Christian experience. It means a commitment of life or to entrust one's life to Jesus: "You stand firm only through faith" (Rom. 11:20); "Whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

Some leading statements about faith may help to encapsulate various facets of Paul's understanding.

1. Faith is the gift of God, the opposite of human bragging.

People communicate truth by contrast. Should one of our children ask us, "What does the word *enormous* mean?" we might say, "A little tower you build in your sandbox is tiny but a mountain is enormous." Paul contrasts faith as a divine gift with human bragging in the sharpest of terms in Rom. 3:26-28. Paul argues that people are justified by faith in God's grace, apart from the works of the Law (understood as human performance); the divine activity eliminates all human bragging.

Rom. 3:27 Where, then, is bragging? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

The term "bragging" expresses the attitude wherein people suppose that they can put themselves right with God by their own activity. American religious pride and a protestant work ethic expresses human boasting in statements such as, "I try to live a decent life." "I always try to do the best I can." "God helps those who help themselves." To take credit for one's faith or to find security in one's performance is boasting.³ From Paul's own experience as a Pharisee, he knew how easy it was for righteousness to slip into bragging:

Phil. 3:9 and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of my own*, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith;

In Rom. 3:19, Paul makes it clear that God planned that every mouth would be stopped, completely unable to utter a word of defense:

Rom 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

The whole world lies bankrupt before God, guilty and accountable for that bankruptcy. The word *boasting/bragging* (καύχησις) means the human assertion of a claim or activity that one can point to as a reason or grounds for divine favor. "The very Scripture that the Jews value so highly emphasizes sin in such a way that anyone who reads them rightly must see that people cannot achieve salvation by their own deeds."⁴ The only possible result of such bragging is despair. "As long as a man boasts in his own deeds, it is impossible for him to trust in God's act of redemption. He can be justified, that is rightly related to God, only when he ceases to boast, and believes."⁵ Confidence in the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα) is the very

³ Sometimes the term "law" can be understood as a system of merit, wherein one can be justified, which Paul debunks (Rom. 3:21ff).

⁴ Leon Morris, "Faith," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 287.

⁵ C.K. Barrett, *Romans*, (San Francisco: Harper Publishing, 1981), 83

opposite of faith. Paul constantly puts before his readers the grace of God, who provides the gift of salvation; correspondingly, humans can only receive their salvation through their trusting response:

This negative discussion about “bragging” prepares the way for Paul’s discussion in Rom. 4 (through a Midrash) about the respective position of Jew and Gentile. There is only one God (3:29) and one way in which God chooses to relate to humanity, the way of faith—for the Jew and the Gentile. In 3:27-29 Paul states so clearly that it is by faith and faith alone, that God relates to humanity (Jew and Gentile):

Rom. 3:27 Where, then, is bragging? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

29 Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,

By way of illustration of his central premise, Paul targets Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race and religion. Paul demonstrates the universal scope of the gospel through Abraham’s role as the grand unifier. The argument develops from the major premise to the minor one. If Paul can exclude bragging from the most likely human candidate, then the minor will certainly be true, i.e., then no one can boast. The Jew looks upon Abraham with ancestral pride. And why not? Abraham is the progenitor of the chosen race, “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα), and as such is the most promising candidate for boasting.⁶ Abraham has children, “of natural or physical descent” (κατὰ σάρκα), i.e., the Jews. But the implication of Rom. 4:1 is that Abraham also has other children, who are his children in another way. If anyone can brag, then Abraham can. But if it can be shown that Abraham himself has no legitimate claim for bragging, then it logically follows, that no one else has such a right, either his children “according to the flesh” or his children other than “according to the flesh,” i.e., the Gentiles.

In Rom. 4:2, the opening post-positive, *for* (γὰρ), provides substantiation for why Abraham is unable to brag, through a contrary to fact conditional sentence (both halves are regarded as untrue):

2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works (which he wasn’t), he had something to brag about (which he didn’t)—but not before God.

⁶The term *flesh* (σάρξ) is frequently used in Romans to refer to natural physical descent.

Rom. 1:3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature (κατὰ σάρκα) is a descendant of David, (NIV)

Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race (κατὰ σάρκα),

Rom. 9:5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry (κατὰ σάρκα) of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Rom. 9:8 In other words, it is not the natural children (τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκός) who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.

Rom. 11:14 in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people (μου τὴν σάρκα) to envy and save some of them.

Paul underscores his earlier affirmation in 3:27 that all human bragging is excluded, which assumes the common Jewish understanding that Abraham was justified on the basis of his works.⁷ For Paul there is only one legitimate boast, “in the Lord” (I Cor. 1:31).

What really counts before God is the inner acceptance of that mysterious work of God whereby people are saved; it is contrasted with vociferous bragging that is based upon human performance. Faith creates an entirely new perspective, a new relationship and new set of values. The extreme energy of a powerful gospel (Rom. 1:16) is actualized by an open hand of the person who trusts in the good news of God’s grace.

Eph. 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—

and

this (ΤΟΥΤΟ) not from yourselves,

it is the gift of God—

9 not by works,

so that no one can boast.

The neuter pronoun, “this” (ΤΟΥΤΟ), refers to “this entirety of the salvation event,” including both the grace of God and the human response of faith—the saving event is a gift of God. Faith is the human response that people can make to the superlative offer. Paul uses the example of Abraham to affirm the grace-full nature of the human response to the divine promise, “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s descendants . . .” (Rom. 4:16). The very human response of trust is beholden to the grace of God. Trust includes the personal acknowledgment of moral bankruptcy as well as the positive trust in Christ to impute the new righteousness, the acceptance of the wonder that God has done everything necessary to enable people to experience the new life. Drawing upon Psa. 32:1-2, Paul states that the “reckoning of righteousness” is also understood as the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:7).

2. Faith is Conviction.

For Paul, the one who believes must also be convinced that certain things are true. Paul says:

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ.

⁷According to *Jub. 23:10* “Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life.” The text of *Kidd. 4:14* states that “we find that Abraham our father had performed the whole Law before it was given, for it is written, ‘Because that Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, and my laws (Gen. 26:5) He was one of the righteous ones not needing repentance—’Thou therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee; but thou has appointed repentance unto me that I am a sinner.” *Prayer of Manasses 8*.

Faith comes from hearing the message of the good news, the word concerning Christ. A popular notion is that it does not matter what people believe as long as they are sincere. Nothing could be further from Paul's thinking.⁸ To hear means that the good news must be articulated and then interpreted. Paul not only affirms the fact that Jesus died; he proceeds to say that Jesus died for our sins (I Cor. 15:3), which is interpretation of the fact. Fact and interpretation belong together. If redemptive facts are not interpreted they are ambiguous and subject to misinterpretation. Such a commitment to historical truth is an aspect that unites Judaism and Christianity; further, the redemptive events are interpreted. It is not enough to say that Israel passed through the dry land of the Sea of Reeds and when the Egyptians tried to follow the same path, they were drowned. Those facts need to be supplied with interpretation. The interpretation for the Exodus is supplied with three Hebrew verbs: 1) *בָּחַר* (*bachar*)—Yahweh *elected* a people for himself, 2) *פָּדָה* (*padhab*)—Yahweh *redeemed/ransomed* a people that were not free, 3) *גָּאֵל* (*gaal*) Yahweh *acted as a kinsman* for a people that were his. In the collective memory of Israel, the Exodus is continually interpreted when it is commemorated. In a similar way, the crucifixion is not only the death of a martyr for a cause, but is God's redemptive activity for "our sins."

In I Cor. 15:3-8 Paul lays out the basic facts of the gospel message—the early Christian *kerygma* to which faith must give assent and entrust oneself:

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

The expression, "for our sins" (I Cor. 15:3) interprets the *kerygma*. This Christian creedal confession parallels interpretive affirmations in the Jewish collective memory (Deut. 6:20-24; 26:5-9; Josh. 24); it is the bedrock of faith. After Paul summarizes the apostolic *kerygma* he states, "Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed" (I Cor. 15:11). Preaching of the gospel message is followed by a trusting response as the listeners are convinced of the truth for themselves.⁹ For Paul, preaching is the medium through which people are convinced, convicted and then entrust themselves to the Christ event.

⁸ Keck, 50.

⁹ See also:

1 Cor. 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (NIV)

1 Cor. 3:5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

3. Faith is personal trust.

The word *trust* is a useful way of expressing what Paul means by *faith* (πίστις—faith; πιστεύω—I believe). Trust is both a verb and a noun in English, but there is no verbal form for *faith*. English speakers shift to the verb, *I believe* when they want to express the idea in verbal form. As Keck argues, the verb *believe* also creates difficulties since it is often associated with the noun *belief*, and can be limited to mere mental assent to a body of doctrines. The response that Paul looked for was a personal entrustment of the self to the person and event, which the gospel announced. To trust is to commit oneself, to rely on one, to allow oneself to be shaped by God at a deep level. This occurs because the object of trust shapes the truster.¹⁰ In the same way, the object of worship (God) shapes the worshipper of God. We can see these aspects of faith in Romans 10:9-10 where Paul builds a midrash from the text of Deut. 30:14. The parallelism is clear:

9 because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For one trusts with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

<i>Confess</i>	<i>Mouth/Lips</i>	<i>Jesus is Lord</i>	<i>Salvation</i>
<i>Trust</i>	<i>Heart</i>	<i>Resurrection</i>	<i>Salvation</i> ¹¹

Confession and trust must coincide with objective and personal truth. It must be true for the individual also. Bultmann notes, “According to Paul, the event of salvation history is actualised for the individual ...faith makes it his. Hence, faith is not at the end of the way to God . . . It is at the beginning. If faith is believing acceptance of that which the kerygma proclaims, it is not thereby reduced to a *fides historica*, for, as confession of God’s act, it recognizes the validity of this act for me.”¹² To confess Jesus as Lord is to confess that one has an ultimate claim on personal life. To believe with the heart is a matter of personal commitment and trust.

In Rom. 4, Paul uses the example of Abraham to support the premise of 3:30:

Rom. 3:30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

For both groups, Jew and Gentile, right relation to God depends on the same thing, *sheer trust*. Paul knows that God pronounced Abraham to be righteous in Gen. 15:6, “And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.” It is important for Paul that the story of Abraham’s justification by faith occurred in Gen. 15, while the story of the covenant of circumcision occurs in Gen. 17. Paul uses a temporal argument here to argue for the priority of trust; Abraham’s trusting response occurred prior to Abraham’s performance, expressed through the covenant of circumcision. The OT affirms circumcision as a necessary sign of the everlasting covenant and was divinely ordained. The OT warns

¹⁰ Keck, 52.

¹¹ Keck, 53

¹² Rudolf Bultmann, “πιστεύω,” *TDNT*, vol. VI, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 216.

that a rejection of circumcision cuts one off from the covenant community. Jesus and the subsequent disciples were circumcised and Jesus never formally abrogated the Jewish practice. However, if circumcision is thought of as a meritorious work, national privilege, personal security or a means of self-justification, then circumcision can become a barrier to salvation (Gal. 5:2). Therefore, God's gift of righteousness or justification did not depend upon circumcision:

Rom. 4:10 How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

This means that circumcision was a sign or seal of righteousness that Abraham possessed by his trust, while he was yet uncircumcised. In Rom. 4:17, Paul appeals to Gen. 17, where God renewed the promise *before* Abraham circumcised himself. The promise includes the statement, "I have made you a father of many nations." Paul affirms that the purpose of Abraham's circumcision was to make him: a) the father of all who believe without being circumcised, and b) the father of the circumcised (4:11-12). Abraham is the father of *all* those whose relationship to God is a matter of trust. The response of trust is the primary means by which the justification of God is made real; it is particularly significant that 27 of the 35 faith passages in Romans and 18 of the 21 faith/trust passages in Galatians address the issue of justification.¹³

When Paul returns to Gen. 15, he interprets Abraham's faith as *sheer trust* when the circumstances said the opposite; Abraham was no longer virile and Sarah had passed through menopause:

Rom. 4:19 He did not weaken in trust when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

Paul is vitally concerned with Abraham's faith; he also affirms that those who believe in the Gospel also repeat Abraham's faith commitment to God, who can be counted upon to fulfill the "impossible" promise. For Paul, trust can only mean trust in the promises of God that encompass the Jesus-event. Abraham trusted that the one who addressed him would fulfill his promise in a creative manner, "he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised" (Rom. 4:5). At its core, trust means that God can be counted on to fulfill his promise. For the Christian, the cross and resurrection are pledges of God—for the past, present and future.

Paul affirms that Christian believers share in Abraham's faith since Abraham serves as the prototype for all that follow in the same footsteps of faith. The acceptance of Jews and Gentiles is based on the common ground of faith/trust. There is no idea of two "tracks" of salvation wherein the Jew is accepted on the basis of the Law while Christians are accepted on the basis of faith:

Rom. 4:12 and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ Leonhard Goppelt, *The Theology of the New Testament, vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 126.

The gospel/good news of Jesus is thus the fulfillment or culmination of what began with Abraham; Paul advances the Abrahamic-argument, when he speaks of the real fulfillment of Gen. 15:6 in those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead:

Rom. 4:22 Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

23 Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written *not for his sake alone*,

24 *but for ours also*. It will be reckoned *to us who believe in him* who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

In Gal. 3:8-9 Paul makes a similar connection between the faith-experience of Abraham and that of Gentile Christians. He also states that the “gospel” to Abraham preceded the gospel of Christ:

Gal. 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.”

9 For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.

4. *Faith means faith-union with Christ, which is also the pre-requisite for the Holy Spirit’s indwelling.*

Faith is not only directed toward propositions that are true (conviction), and personal trust, but faith also brings a union with Christ, so that faith can be spoken of as a *faith-union*. For Paul, the faith that saves also involves a union of will and life between the believer and the Savior, analogous to the sexual union; the sexual union of a man with a prostitute parallels the faith-union that takes place between a believer and Christ:

1 Cor. 6:16 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.”

17 But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

If we were to ask Paul how a person is so closely and intimately joined with Christ’s one spirit, Paul would say, *by faith\by trust*. Paul speaks of a mutual indwelling through various forms of the verb, “I dwell [within]” (οἰκέω), the verb “I have” (ἔχω) and preposition “in” (ἐν), the believer in the Spirit, Christ in the believer, the believer in Christ, the Spirit of God in the believer:

“you are in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι)

“the Spirit of God dwells in you” (πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν)

“if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ” (εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει)

“if Christ is in you” (εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν)

“if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells within you” (εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν)

“through his Spirit who dwells within you” (διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικούντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν). Rom. 8:9-11.¹⁴

The thrust of Romans 6 is that of a clear identification of Christ and the believer, so much so, that the pattern of the cross, death, burial and resurrection applies to the life of each Christian. Paul uses the preposition *with* (σύν) to highlight the communion or faith-union that a believer has with Christ:

Rom. 6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we have been *buried with him* by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been *united with him* in a death like his, we will certainly be *united with him* in a resurrection like his.

6 We know that our old self *was crucified with him* so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 For if we died *with Christ*, we also believe that we will live *with him*.

Faith-union finds concrete expression through the sacrament of baptism, to the extent that one is plunged into a “watery grave” (buried with him by baptism), wherein people emerge into newness of life.

This conception of faith-union builds upon the idea of corporate solidarity that we find in the Hebrew Bible. To a new generation that had not actually come out of Egypt, Joshua, speaking for the Lord, says:

And I brought *your fathers* out of Egypt...

you came to the sea...

and Egypt pursued *your fathers* with chariots and horsemen to the Reed Sea

when *they* cried to the Lord...

He put darkness between *you* and the Egyptians...

and brought the sea upon *them*...

your eyes have seen what I have done in the wilderness...

And *you lived* in the wilderness for a long time. (Josh. 24:6-7)

Although Joshua’s generation was not alive at the time of the Exodus, he nonetheless believes that they were present: your fathers = you, your fathers = they = you = your eyes.

¹⁴See also Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; Phil. 3:9; II Cor. 2:17.

Davies draws a parallel with “Rabbinic literature in the light of Israelite conceptions of personality and community. Just as the Church for Paul was an extension of the personality as it were of Christ, so also was the individual Christian; it follows that the experience of Christ can be re-enacted in the latter: the Christian man can die and rise with his Lord.”¹⁵ Pedersen summarizes Israel’s sense of community:

Community goes deeper than one generation: it extends backwards as well as forwards through history. We see this whenever we consider the family. From father to son the same soul grows through time; it is the same in preceding and succeeding generations, just as at any time it is common to the whole family...The relation to the fathers cannot be decided merely by the sons deriving the substance of their souls from them...Therefore the relation between fathers and descendants is mutual. Just as the blessing of the fathers is inherited by the sons, in the same manner the greatness of the sons reacts upon the fathers. In face of this view of history it is of no importance to distinguish sharply between what has been done by each generation. The Israelites to whom Amos spoke had come up from Egypt (3:2); this can be said because every Israelite shared in this experience.¹⁶

Paul reminds the Galatians of their initial faith-experience, which likewise signaled the presence of the Spirit. He has one major question for them, “Did you receive the Spirit from works of the Law or from the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2). The Holy Spirit ignites the beginning point of the Galatian experience. What they received supernaturally came not through the Law (human performance) but through faith—the experience of trust in the person of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who trust are “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13), and are promised the “down-payment and pledge of what is yet to come (ἄρραβών)”¹⁷ and the “first-fruit” (ἀπαρχή), which will lead to the harvest of the whole.¹⁸ Later, in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he says that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law . . . in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14). Paul also affirms that believers “though the Spirit by faith” await “the hope of righteousness” (Gal. 5:5).

5. Faith is a growing responsiveness to God’s work in the Christian life.

For Paul, faith does not at all mean a one-time event, a ticket to salvation, but a growing response to God’s work. When Paul speaks about the righteousness of God, which is revealed “from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:16), he makes it clear that the response of faith characterizes the entire Christian life, from start to finish. Faith is sometimes used in the context of “obedience”: “you . . . have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (Rom. 6:17); “not all obeyed the gospel” (Rom. 10:16); “your obedience came to all” (Rom. 16:19). The aim of Paul’s preaching is “the obedience of faith among the nations” (Rom. 1:5). The noun “obedience” (ὑπακοή) and the

¹⁵W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, (London: SPCK Press, 1955), 109.

¹⁶Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, vol. I-II (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 276.

¹⁷ II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14.

¹⁸ Rom. 8:23; in reference to Jesus, I Cor. 15:20, 23.

verb “I obey” (ὑπακούω) are directly related to the rich verb “I hear” (ἀκούω), which in Hebrew thought, means the ability to respond in love for God (Shema of Deut. 6:4-5).

While faith means trust or reliance upon God, it is also directly related to an individual’s conduct in the community. While genuine trust is an individual affair (Rom. 14:22), it is also fully conscious of the other members of the community, be they “weak in faith” or “strong in faith.” When Paul says, “Whatsoever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:22), he means conduct by which a person violates one’s conscience and offends another member of the community. Genuine faith implies a response to social needs, expressed through love. Faith is not only the initial response to the Gospel with love as the outcome; rather “faith-through- love, love-energized faith—as the close association of the two elsewhere in Paul also suggests.”¹⁹ The primary means for growth in faith in the Christian life is love (Phil. 5). In several places, faith is knit to various members of the Pauline trio: faith, hope, love (I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 1:15-18; I Thess. 1:3; Col. 1:4-5). The Christian life is summed up:

Gal. 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but *faith working through love*.

Thus, Paul says that Christ dwells in the hearts of believers through faith (Eph. 3:17) as they experience the love of Christ.

Paul also affirms the churches that are growing in faith; their faith/trust is dynamic and is not a static entity (II Cor. 8:7; 10:15; II Thess. 1:3; II Cor. 10:15). Paul speaks of filling up the deficiencies in faith (I Thess. 3:10). He can speak of Christian communities that are known by their faith (I Thess. 1:8; Rom. 1:8; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:14). Likewise, he points to Abraham’s “growing faith” that is an example to others (Rom. 4:20-21); faith grows strong as new life develops (Philemon 5). Paul’s own self-understanding of his Christian life is expressed through the dynamic of faith, “I have been crucified with Christ and no longer is it I that lives, but Christ lives in me; and what I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:19-20). Similarly, faith is the means by which the Spirit is received and the powerful gifts of the Spirit:

Gal. 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by *hearing with faith (i.e., hearing that emerges from faith)?*

5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by *hearing with faith?*

Faith is also the means by which Christians were “sealed” (ἐσφραγίσθητε) with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). Faith may also refer to a special gift of the Spirit (I Cor. 13:2) called a miracle-working faith (I Cor. 12:9) that is exhibited as healing power, granted to some of the members of the community; all are not expected to possess this miracle-working power (I Cor. 12:29). Faith is a “fruit” (sg.)²⁰ of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This fruit of the Spirit seems to be distinguished from “saving faith,” and may well be regarded as “faithfulness, reliability, ongoing steadiness”; the context for the fruit of the Spirit is that of

¹⁹ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 638. See I Cor. 13:13; 16:13-14; Col. A:4; I Thess. 1:3; 3:6; 5:8; II Thess. 1:3; Philem. 5-7; Eph. 1:15; 3:17; 6:23.

²⁰ Contrasted with the “works of the flesh” (plural).

the community. Even a house church is called “the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Since life is not peaceful or fair to Christians, faith is also a part of the Christian’s armor, “shield of faith,” which enables believers to quench the fiery darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16).

Clearly, there must be growth in faith, “Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you, will greatly expand” (II Cor. 10:15). Faith means the ongoing process of self-adjustment to the norm of Christian faith and experience. Some Corinthian triumphalists, possess a faith, which is in vain or empty since they disbelieve that Christ rose from the dead (I Cor. 15:14, 17).

6. *“The faith” is the living deposit of what Christians believe.*

Paul sometimes uses the term to articulate the entire body of preaching/teaching and practice that characterizes the Christian community. Thus, Paul preaches “the faith” that he had formerly persecuted (Gal. 1:23). Paul summons self-examination: “Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith, test yourselves” (II Cor. 13:5); “Stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13). Particularly in the Pastorals,²¹ the term “the faith” is used with respect to the apostolic tradition and orthodoxy: “sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2; “will renounce the faith” (I Tim. 4:1; 4:6), “I have kept the faith” (II Tim. 4:7).

7. *Faith is expressed in the context of the Christian community.*

In a communal context, Paul says that there are some who are weak in faith (Rom. 14:1); in this setting, the “weak in faith” are those who eat with an over-scrupulous conscience; those who are “strong in faith” are those who may eat with genuine freedom; however the strong need to express their freedom in a way that does not violate the scruples of the weak. Faith means an ability to examine oneself critically as to whether one’s attitude and behavior springs from faith. For “everything that does not proceed from faith is sin”—in the context of activity that violates one’s conscience (Rom. 14:23; also I Cor. 8:7-12). While faith is personal, it will be expressed in different ways by the members of the community. The strong in faith are able to eat everything without a tinge of conscience (Rom. 14:2), while the weak in faith are limited in terms of what they can eat without damaging their personal integrity. The context indicates that the weaker brother holds convictions about diet so that he is convinced that he must not eat meat. Although Paul takes the theological position of the stronger brothers, he commands respect for the weaker brother who is convinced of the rightness of his position, albeit over-scrupulous.

Rom. 14:5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.

14:22 The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve.

Paul also speaks about the “measure of faith” (μέτρον πίστεως) that is coordinated with the practice of spiritual gifts.

²¹ Since the Pauline authorship is frequently under question, it may be possible to attribute the authorship to an amanuensis, given a free-hand in the composition or a thoroughly committed Pauline disciple. See J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1960), 30-34.

Rom. 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

12:6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, according to the proportion to faith (κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως).

Expressions of conscience will differ in the community since the faith-response of its members differs. Paul also states that God assigns a certain measure of faith to different individuals just as gifts are expressed in proportion to faith. “The reference is not merely to stages or grades of πίστις, but to differences conditioned by individual gifts and situations.”²²

Implications

Why is it that people will pay good money to a circus for various performances, one of which is the thrill engendered by high-wire trapeze artists? A portion of their entrance fee pays for a split-second, in which a trapeze artist lets go of one bar and reaches for another bar or an outreached hand. Will the artist fall in that split-second? In some respects, the human trust-response is analogous in that growth in trust and understanding of trust involve risks of one sort or another. It means that people who begin the Christian adventure will need to let go of inadequate securities and the deadly status-quo, and reach out to embrace the new, found in a deeper personal involvement with God. Over the course of their Christian journey, they become aware of new possibilities that will involve the surrender of flimsy securities. Christians who are conscious of their need for God find the strength to risk their “comfort-zone,” and are motivated to learn the content and tools of their faith.

To be sure, Christians and their leaders need to be aware of the expansive nature of trust in God and in his Son through his person, words and works. Our Christian culture needs to consciously let go of reductionism, wherein one text or one idea is the “real” canon within the canon, which serves as the pretext for one’s own personal and theological agenda. Each text has its own all-important context for determining the nature and nuance of trust.

For Paul, faith is the all-important human response to the wonderful Good News; it is no simple passport to salvation, nor a life-insurance policy. The human response of trust is the gift of God’s grace. In a real way, Paul did not sit down and determine that he would believe. Rather, he confesses that he was overcome; a new creation was spoken into existence in his personal life, “The God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness . . . has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’” (II Cor. 4:6). Just as light shone over the formless void at the time of creation, so the light of Jesus re-created Paul.

Trust characterizes the beginning, growth, progress and final goal of the Christian life. Personal trust is to pervade the whole of the Christian life, “We walk by faith” (II Cor. 5:7) and is the means of authentic existence: “. . . and what I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). The human response embraces conviction of the truth of the

²² R. Bultmann, “πίστευω,” *TDNT*, vol. VI, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 218.

Good News and the personal commitment to the truth. It enables a genuine faith-union with Christ in the events of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection into new life. Faith is likewise a growing response in a communal context, which is also linked with other virtues of hope and love.²³ For Paul, hope itself may be expressed as a faith-certainty directed to the future.

The Christian life is so much more than the minimalist-thinking about barely getting into the "holy club," but active and joyous participation in the life of Jesus, then and now. The Christian thrives in an atmosphere of trust in the context of the "already but not yet," when trust will give way to sight (I Cor. 13:12). Paul can even express that Abraham's example of trust was written not for Abraham's sake alone, "but for our sake also. It (trust) will be reckoned to us who trust in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:23-25). Abraham's trusting response leaps over the centuries to be inclusive in scope—not exclusive or restrictive.

Trust involves a complete reorientation of the entire person, a trust in God's promise and guarantee (Rom. 4:16-25). The incredible gift of the Gospel involves an incredible obligation, the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 6:16ff; 10:16), a change of one's personal will and a new way of thinking about the grace of God.

²³ I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6, Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:4-5; I Thess. 1:3; 5:8.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom.* Peter J. Leithart. IVP Academic, 2010, 372 pp.**

Though fashioned as a historical biography of the first Christian emperor, Leithart's work is more of a theological *apologia* of Constantine and a critique of John Howard Yoder's views of *Constantinianism* (the view that the Christian faith went through manifold distortions in the fourth century A.D.), which he proclaims on p. 10. In fact, if this book had been written by an early Christian apologist, it would have been titled, *Contra Yoder* (the author even takes effort to critique the fiction writer Dan Brown's portrait of Constantine in the *Da Vinci Code*). Leithart also desires to provide a *practicum* for us in the present as to how to discern contemporary Christian approaches to the U.S. wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. At first blush, one wonders whether the author has attempted to tackle too many issues in one book (which even includes a comparative critique of Constantine and John Locke's philosophies of religious toleration). This is no doubt the case. It is certainly legitimate to write a historical biography of Constantine, to write a theological response to a critique of *Constantinianism*, and to write for a present-day context. However, one can simply not do all of these things in a single work, especially without providing a much deeper historical critique and context.

I will review this work from the standpoint of my own specialization in ancient history. Thus, I will not take up Leithart's arguments against Yoder, nor the present-day applications, as they not only have been reviewed extensively, they are outside of my purview. However, the basis of Leithart's theological arguments are historical; thus, my rationale for this narrowly focused review.

We may start with some of Leithart's basic observations about Constantine. He argues that the Emperor was a sincere convert to Christianity, ended the persecution of Christians, united the church (without meddling in the Council of Nicaea), and helped spread the message of Christ throughout the Mediterranean world. He practiced religious toleration, and was thus not interested in forcing conversions from pagans, heretics, and Jews. He used legislation to reform the empire to Christian sensibilities, extending justice to all. Of course, Leithart does expose some of the Emperor's 'warts' (the murder of his wife and sons, for example), although, for the most part, his view is overwhelmingly positive, unlike most modern historical studies. Perhaps it is in response to the negative 'press' that Constantine has received (since Gibbon in the 18th century, but continued by Burckhardt's *The Age of Constantine the Great*, 1883).

One of my main concerns is Leithart's lack of critical analysis of the primary sources, although he is fairly well read on the secondary material (but does not provide page numbers to the articles in his twenty-four page bibliography, making it difficult for the scholar to pursue further research). However, some important biographies of Constantine from the past generation have been omitted (e.g., M. Grant, *Constantine the Great*, 1993, and more recently, Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor*, 2009). Moreover, Leithart does not engage in a critique of the ancient sources (pagan and Christian) and usually accepts the views of the Early Church Fathers concerning Constantine without historical-critical analysis. His uncritical 'tolerance' of Eusebius' account of Constantine is

unilateral (although he does castigate Eusebius as more of a fashion reporter when it comes to the subject of the Council of Nicaea; p. 149, n. 3):

By Eusebius's account, Constantine was a regular in prayer and even erected a Mosaic tabernacle outside his army camp, to which he retreated for prayers before battle. He was generous to the poor and to widows and treated prisoners with human kindness. He recognized his complete dependence upon God and had a strong personal sense of destiny. He had been chosen, he believed, not only to deliver the church from persecution, but to spread the truth of God throughout the world. Constantine believed that his calling was to proclaim the Son of God to the Romans (p. 90).

Entire books have been written on the reliability (or lack thereof) of Eusebius and his heavy handed bias, both theological and political (again, Leithart misses, for example, a crucial work on Eusebius; Robert M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian*, 1980).

However, it is not just Eusebius who is not critiqued by our author. The source material concerning Constantine is excruciatingly contradictory. In addition to Eusebius, one would expect a panoramic survey of pro-Constantinian Christian writers, such as Lactantius, Orosius, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, Theodoretus, and Zonarus, to name a few. Furthermore, the pagan writers Libanius, Maternus, Aurelius Victor, and Zosimus, were all very antagonistic to the memory of the first Christian emperor. In sum, the sources are not only poorly fragmented, but highly contradictory from the start. Thus, to provide, as Leithart does, a somewhat authoritative and positive biographical survey of the life of Constantine is highly premature, as he has not engaged in the historian's craft of 'dialoging' with the sources. Because of this, it is not possible for me to fully critique his conclusions concerning Constantine.

Because of this, Leithart's observations and conclusions about *Constantinianism*, his critique of Yoder, and his contemporary practical applications are based on a faulty use (or lack of use) of the source material. If we cannot be certain that we have discerned the true historical Constantine (or for that matter, have not even made the attempt to struggle with the original sources), then we cannot proceed to the next steps concerning theology and practice. As a historian, I much prefer the aforementioned work of Michael Grant (which I reviewed when it came out) because his conclusions about the Christian emperor were balanced, yet tentative, exhibiting his heavy dependence upon the faulty sources. Grant refused to make conclusions about Constantine that were not warranted by a careful study. The Constantine of the ancient sources is a messy and contradictory mix of good and bad qualities, and modern studies should mirror this dilemma.

Mindful of my historical critique, I must say Leithart writes in a very compelling manner, with authority, force, and at times great erudition. However, I cannot recommend the work as a historical study of Constantine, and thus it should not be used as a basis in which to argue for or against theological and political positions in the present day.

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***Islam and Christianity: Theological Themes in Comparative Perspective.* John Renard. University of California Press, 2011, 314 pp.**

Since the tragic events of 9/11, journalists, political theorists (both subdued and sensationalist), and general speculation have propounded that the “Christian West” and the “Muslim Middle East” are on a collision course that will determine, to a large extent, the political and religious topography of the 21st century. On an appreciable level, scholars of comparative religion have intoned some assertive qualifications to this overly broad hypothesis: Christianity and Islam have interacted throughout history; both religions are historically attenuated; and both religions are possessed of, at the very least, an in-house pluralism, with several movements and groups claiming to speak for “all” Muslim or “all” Christians and none actually doing so. For its part, theology, as a distinct academic field, has transformed itself over the past decade from passive bystander to active participant in these discussions. The most notable step forward on this front is the advent of “comparative theology.” Notable thinkers in this emergent discipline include Francis X. Clooney (at Harvard Divinity School) and Robert C. Neville (at Boston University). In short, comparative theology has claimed to study religions in a comparative and critical manner (as does secular religious study) but without forcing scholars to renounce or ignore their own theological commitments as they go about their studies (thus rendering the discipline a sub-branch of theology). The result has been an arena of inquiry that is dynamic and fresh, comparing different theological systems on a deep and sometimes messy level, where philosophical and devotional beliefs interact across the scriptures and great writings of committed religious believers across diverse traditions. It is in the camp of comparative theology that this new book by John Renard falls. It falls there implicitly, given the theological focus of much of Renard’s comparative work and his own Christian beliefs, and explicitly, as he readily draws on and agrees with the work of Robert Neville. Having distinguished himself for years as a notable voice on Islamic mystical thought and literature, Renard’s turn toward comparative work brings a welcome voice and expertise to the field.

In both his preface and prologue Renard makes some preliminary methodological moves which warrant specific attention. He withholds judgment over the “best” way to compare the two religions in question—he is content to be drawing analogies and highlighting similarities rather than constructing some sort of overarching theology-of-religions perspective. Renard also notes that in dealing with so vast a subject as the general history and theological conceptions of the two largest religions in the world, certain generalizations must come into play if the work is to be accessible on any level, a point that is exacerbated by the fact that he wants the work to appeal to a more general readership than the upper echelon of the academy. Finally, and most importantly, Renard greatly expands the notion of “theology.” Whereas this term typically denotes some sort of learned reflection on the doctrines and practices of a particular religious tradition, Renard states that he intends theology “to include the broad panoply of texts and images and the various modes of interpreting them; ways of reasoning and analysis of human ‘religious’ experience...and the host of institutional and cultural developments that have formed the settings and contexts for all such interpretation, processing, and expression” (Preface, xii). It is this move that I find problematic. The book’s subtitle claims to be presenting “theological themes in comparative perspective.” Yet, owing to Renard’s remarkable lexical expansion of the term “theology,” many themes investigated throughout the work have little consonance with theology as it is more typically understood in the context of religious discussions. A subtitle

that instead claimed to compare “developmental themes” or even “historical and theological themes” would have serviced Renard’s scope more effectively.

From here, Renard moves into a series of chapters (contained in four categorical “sections” of the book), each composed of a parallel description of some historical, developmental, or theological element between the two faiths, and then moving on into some brief comparative comments. Part 1 of the book deals with “historical dimensions.” Chapter 1 focuses on both religions’ beliefs about their sacred scriptures and their earliest periods of historical development. Renard is accessible on these points, noting insightful points with lucidity: “[W]hereas the eternally existent Qu’ran embodies a perfect and self-sufficient revelation, the Christian canon retains the Old Testament as integral to the tradition...” (46). Chapter 2 details some of the major features of both faiths’ spread over major portions of the globe through various conquests and conversion campaigns. While the chapter is brief in its historical delving, one appreciates Renard’s restraint in dealing with some of the more objectionable practices that beleaguered various periods in each religions’ history (55-56).

The book’s second part (“Creedal Dimensions”) contains the most explicitly theological material. Chapter 3 focuses on the movement “from story to creed” as the narratives of early community-formation were appropriated in systematic and scholastic ways as the religions developed. But it is Chapter 4 (“The Emergence of Theological Disciplines”) which truly stands out due its excellent elucidation of both Christian and Muslim thought, traversing such complex topics as doctrine of God, models of understanding revelation, and theodicy with relative ease and minimal distortion. (A difficulty arose, however, when I read Renard’s strongly worded pronouncement that “In both Christian and Islamic traditions, all theological statements have political implications, and all political statements have theological implications” (96). While this statement *could* be true, it is remarkably unrestrained and at least somewhat controversial as presented here, and Renard seems to assume it without any argumentation.)

The third and fourth sections deal with institutional elements and devotional/mystical elements, respectively. The third section is perfectly functional, though not hugely unique in any way. The descriptive sections are assured in their handling of the facts, and the comparative appraisals are unsurprising, with Renard mostly noting self-evident parallels, such as the fact that “official formulations [from the caliphate or papacy]” have often filled in the gaps left “by scriptural and positive law” (134), and that “both traditions struggled to find the right balance between religious and secular institutions” (153). However, Chapter 7 (“Sources, Methods, and Social Values in Theological Ethics”) matches Chapter 4 with its usefulness and strength of insight. The section on the interplay between theodicy, human freedom, and human responsibility in Islamic theology is especially notable (160-166) for its fairness and distillation of the major contributions by Muslim thinkers. Chapters 8 and 9 are not quite as strong, but are still highly useful, as Renard draws out some valid comparisons from among the spiritualized and mystical tendencies in both bodies of faith.

Having concluded his survey of topics and his general comparative interactions, Renard makes some interesting moves in his Epilogue. With a marked tone of censure, he claims that much contemporary Christian theology is “intramural” insofar as it is only seeking to protect itself “from the threat of contamination” (223). Using Robert Neville and other thinkers as a springboard, Renard posits that we should be striving after a global theology

and “see ourselves on an equal footing with all other believing human beings” (224). While this is a fine ethical statement, in terms of human rights and other considerations, it is a controversial statement theologically, and it highlights the tendentious movement of comparative theology to see itself as opposed to “apologetics” (Hugh Nicholson has also made strong moves in this direction, as seen in his latest work on comparative theological methodology and its implications for religious rivalry). Thankfully, rather than simply stating his opinion on these matters, Renard moves into a helpful discussion of five major proofs for the kind of “theological dialogue” that he desires (227-232).

While readers may disagree with Renard’s methodological outlook and overall agenda, especially as distilled in his prologue and epilogue, his discussion of the issues certainly opens up a fair field for reflection, disagreement, and consideration. This work fluctuates between being perfectly functional, remarkably insightful, and a little bit controversial. As such, it has all the hallmarks of a great teaching tool, and stands as a work which informed lay thinkers and interreligious scholars alike can benefit from.

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Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal.
Jeffrey J. Kripal. University of Chicago Press, 2011, 376 pp.

And now for something completely different. Jeffrey Kripal, the J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Religion and Chair of the Religious Studies Department at Rice University, has produced what is clearly a labor of love (and personal fascination) with his *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal*. At once creepy, sordid, and just plain weird, the book is also—to a great extent—scholarly.

Kripal explores how the West seems to have often dealt with its mysteries and fears—whether religious, occultic, existential, paranormal, or mystical—through the “metaphor” of comics and graphic novels. Certain *mythical themes* or “mythemes,” says Kripal, have recurred throughout history. These mythemes denote “a set of tropes or story lines about the metamorphosis of the human form that are deeply indebted to the history of the religious imagination but have now taken on new scientific or parascientific forms in order to give shape to innumerable works of pulp fiction, science fiction, superhero comics, and metaphysical film.” (pp. 1-2).

Though I admit not being much of a comic book fan, I found the book to be intriguing as Kripal capably draws inescapable parallels between various religious and occult practices and beliefs and how they have manifested themselves in the “common” comic book. It seems there is much, much more lurking beneath the “pulp” surface of these books than many of us may have previously thought and that one can get a veritable honors degree in Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Alchemy, Kabbalism, Hinduism, occultism, or other religious movements simply by becoming a comic book devotee. But it is more than mere *information* that gets through in reading these comics; it is also, it would seem, a curious form of quasi-religious *initiation*—particularly to the extent that one identifies or fantasizes with the various characters.

Most of us are familiar, at least in name, with comic book staples such as *Captain America*, *Spider Man*, *Batman*, *Fantastic Four*, *Hulk*, *The Invisibles*, *Thor*, *X-Men*, *Watchmen*, and others.

Kripal covers all the major players (alive and dead) behind these works; those who hold the places of honor in today's comic book and super-weirdness scene: Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, Philip K. Dick, Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, Frank Miller, et al., and delves into the manner in which occultism, mystical experiences, aliens, and alternative religions and philosophies have played a central part in the formation of their ideas and storylines—even their *mission*. For me, the most important contribution of the book is Kripal's skillful yeoman's work in specifically identifying the manner in which various occult or religious ideas are introduced not only into the comics that so many people read, but into entertainment on a very broad scale—including television and movies. One gets the impression that we've been getting proselytized into alternative religions for most of our lives—we just didn't know it as they were cloaked under the guise of innocuous amusements.

Kripal's main concern seems to be to demonstrate how—lacking better, more precise vehicles—comic book and science fiction writers have used their craft to express something real but inexpressible, particularly things they may have experienced themselves. Through purposeful and colorful exaggeration, comic book heroes/villains and science fiction pro/antagonists represent what, in life, is often very vague and make it definite. Therein, they hope to unveil the experiences or creeping sense of a hidden realm of a cross-section of Western culture wherein people are both fascinated and haunted by “something beyond” or “above.” Comics take the inexplicable and try to make it into something tangible.

The book is not a difficult read, is well done, and is beatifically adorned with frame-worthy illustrations (that is, if hanging illustrations of men in spandex is, well, your thing). Ultimately, my concern is not with the quality of the book, but with that in which Kripal has chosen to invest his personal fascinations. Most of his subject matter is what orthodox theologians throughout Christian history would have considered properly demonic. The real-life “mystical” experiences he describes as undergone both by him and the writers whose lives he unpacks are realities that scores of past Christians have not only acknowledged as real phenomena, but have elucidated as seducingly dangerous and spiritually ruinous. I found it surprising that, as chair of a major religious studies department, he never once addressed this (except perhaps in passing). Rather, his tone strikes me as that of an occultic *celebrant*—even though he avers that he neither believes nor disbelieves much of the quasi-mystical material he covers. Kripal seems almost giddy over the high-weirdness of his peculiar subject matter. I think those interested in mysticism and pop culture will greatly benefit from his work. But my recommendation to Dr. Kripal is that he start taking seriously two thousand years of Christian tradition that would further inform him as to the precise nature of what he uncritically assumes to be a good thing.

Gannon Murphy
American Theological Inquiry

Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary. The Calvin 500 Series.
David W. Hall (ed.). P & R Publishing, 2010, xxii + 566 pp.

Throughout 2009 Christians around the world celebrated the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Genevan Reformer, John Calvin. Alongside such celebrations were the requisite publishing ventures. The closest thing to an official celebration of the quincentenary was the

Calvin 500 Project, an international, interdenominational, and interdisciplinary celebration of John Calvin's life, theology, and significance. The Calvin 500 Project hosted two concurrent conferences in Geneva and commissioned an eight volume series of books entitled 'The Calvin 500 Series.' The conferences were directed by Dr David Hall, senior pastor of Midway Presbyterian Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, and sponsored by a number of significant American Presbyterian Seminaries such as Westminster Theological Seminary, Westminster Seminary California, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Erskine Theological Seminary.

The two concurrent conferences run by the Calvin 500 Project consisted of the Tribute Conference, a 4-day international symposium with leading scholars in the historic *Auditoire* in Geneva (July 6-9, 2009); and the Commemorating Calvin Conference, a 5-day international symposium with leading ministers in Calvin's church, St Pierre Cathedral (July 5-9, 2009). The articles comprising *Tributes to John Calvin* come directly from those presented at the Tribute Conference. 'The essays in *Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary* illuminate Calvin's times, thought and legacy, and provide a celebratory tribute to one of the most influential people in history. This book commemorates the quincentenary of Calvin's birth (July 10, 1509) and attests to the remarkably enduring influence of his life and work' (from the dust jacket).

Tributes to John Calvin consists of twenty-three essays from some of today's leading Calvin scholars and Reformed theologians, arranged into three broad sections: 1) Calvin's Times: introducing Calvin the man, his times, and his context; 2) Calvin's Topics: spanning a diverse array of key themes from his life and thought; and 3) Calvin Today and Tomorrow: in which various essays survey Calvin's ongoing influence and importance. Most of the essays are newly commissioned pieces and advance the scholarly discussion on Calvin and Calvinism considerably.

Most of the contributors to the volume are well known Calvin and Reformed scholars, such as Robert Kingdon ('Calvin and Ecclesiastical Discipline'), Henri Blocher ('Calvin the Frenchman'), Douglas Kelly ('The Catholicity of Calvin's Theology'), R. Scott Clark ('Calvin's Principle of Worship'), Anthony Lane ('Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance Revisited'), Andrew McGowan ('John Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture'), Michael Horton ('Calvin's Eucharistic Ecclesiology'), Richard Gamble ('Calvin Bibliography'), Darryl Hart ('Consistently Contested: Calvin Among Nineteenth-Century Reformed Protestants in the United States,'), Bruce McCormack ('Union with Christ in Calvin's Theology: Grounds for a Divinization Theory?'), and Herman Selderhuis ('See You in Heaven: Calvin's View of Life, Death, and Eternal Life'). Other less well-known but no less accomplished contributors also appear such as John Witte, Jr. ('Calvin the Lawyer'), Isabelle Graessle ('Calvin and Women: Between Irritation and Admiration'), Richard Burnett ('John Calvin on Sacred and Secular History'), and David Hall ('Calvin's Principles of Governance: Homology in Church and State'). Each contributor brought to the conference (and now to this volume) a distinct specialty and expertise, which enriched the volume as it spanned cultural studies, biblical themes, historical criticism, and theological construction. While not at the Conference, Albert Mohler, Jr. provides a brief Foreword for the work in which he reflects upon Calvin's continued relevance for church and society today.

One is not able to mention every essay in a critical review such as this but several stand out for explicit comment. John Witte, Jr., Professor of Law at Emory University School of

Law, breezed into the Conference, known to some but not to others who were there. His paper on 'Calvin the Lawyer' stands out as one of the clearest and compelling of the conference (and thus of the volume), possibly because the theme he took up was not a common one in Calvin studies. Witte presents Calvin the jurist and takes the reader on a tour of Calvin's Geneva with its 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances, the 1542 Edict of the Lieutenant, and the 1543 Ordinances of Offices and Officers, constitutional laws that together defined the new structure, power, and relations of church and state in Protestant Geneva. Calvin went on to draft major new ordinances on marriage, children, social welfare, public morality, and education – more than a hundred new ordinances in total. Witte then perceptively deals with two themes in Calvin's thought – the balancing act between liberty and law, and that between church and state. This essay has the clarity of a lawyers mind and is compelling reading.

Unfortunately, and inexplicably, one of Henry Blocher's two presentations at the conference was not included in this volume, 'Calvin on Divine Election.' This is unfortunate for I found it one of the best presentations of the entire conference from one of the best Calvin and Reformed scholars of our time. The essay included in this volume, 'Calvin the Frenchman,' is a delightful and winsome piece of work which gently reminds North Americans, and the rest of us, that Calvin is first and foremost a Frenchman, and understanding *that* goes a long way to understanding *him*. However, it is the essay not included here that was the real gem. Here Blocher challenged popular readings of Calvin's doctrine of election and presented a sophisticated, and to my opinion, largely accurate, and more evangelical reading of election, its place in Calvin's thought and, importantly, its function. Perhaps we shall see this essay appear in print in a journal at some stage.

The doctrine of assurance lies at the heart of many Reformed debates and Calvin's own work has been mined many times in order to resource such work. Having written on Calvin's doctrine of assurance in a major journal article in 1979, renowned Calvin scholar, Anthony Lane, here revisits his earlier arguments and calls aspects of it into question, before presenting what he believes is a far more accurate assessment of the issue. Lane clearly shows how Calvin considered assurance to be of the essence of faith and how this was coordinated with various other aspects of this theology, notably with the doctrine of election. Throughout the essay Lane shows Calvin the pastor-scholar and not the cold, heartless man he is often portrayed as being. Like everything Lane writes, this is a well researched and well written essay, by one who has a unique familiarity with Calvin's work.

A conference on Calvin without an essay on his doctrine of Holy Scripture would be incomplete and thus Andrew McGowan took up this theme and continued to substantiate his recent work on the topic. In short, McGowan argues that Calvin held to a high view of Scripture which may best be summarized around the theological doctrine of infallibility. He did not, however fit neatly into what became known as the doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy. To substantiate such claims, correct claims in my opinion, McGowan examines Calvin's overall approach to Scripture, the inner dogmatic structure of the *Institutes*, and his understanding of the relationship between Word and Spirit. In a conference dominated by conservative Reformed and Presbyterian theologians, and representing the most significant Presbyterian seminaries in the United States, McGowan's remarks were perhaps the most controversial of the conference. Until recently McGowan was adjunct professor of theology

at several American Presbyterian Seminaries, however, due to the views represented in this essay, he now spends most of his time in his home country and on the continent.

Two final essays of note are worth mentioning. First, Bruce McCormack continued to outline his objections to any form of divinization theory in Calvin's theology, and thus in Reformed theology more generally. McCormack shows the robust forensicism of Calvin's doctrine of justification, a doctrine which, in McCormack's mind, leaves little room for anything approaching a divinization theory. He then examines the central role the doctrine of our union with Christ plays in Calvin's theology and seeks to account for the often noticed fact that Calvin treats of sanctification before justification in the *Institutes*. Second, Herman Selderhuis concludes the volume with his essay on Calvin's eschatology. At the conference Selderhuis handed out Calvin 'mints' before his presentation, saying these may aid us all in keeping awake. While the candy was nice, he needn't have worried. As one of the foremost Calvin scholars working today, Selderhuis provides a pithy summary of Calvin's views on life, death, and eternal life, drawn principally from Calvin's letters and the Psalms, before concluding the essay with insightful comments on the way in which Calvin's theology became practice. The biographical section of this essay is what may interest many readers, as we learn of the sadness and the great emotional effect the suffering and death of many of Calvin's friends had on him. He writes of his tears over the death of Claude Féray, a decagon and good friend of his, we learn that he was an 'emotional wreck' after the death of his dear son Jacques. However, it was the death of his wife, Idelette, which severely affected Calvin. After her death he claimed he had lost his best friend and his most cherished supporter. He once wrote that he would have to continue life in her absence as 'no more than half a man, since God recently took my wife to Himself' (p. 541).

Several of the essays (and presentations) are torpid and predictable affairs. R. Scott Clark argues yet again for a strict principle of worship whereby 'only that may be done which must be done, and what must be done is that which is commanded by the Word' (p. 269). He shows how this was Calvin's practice, albeit with some practical adaptability on his part for the sake of the unity of the church, in dialogue with Luther, Bucer, the Anglicans, and other who did not share his understanding of the second commandment for public worship. Similarly, Douglas Kelly's essay on the catholicity of Calvin's thought presents the now familiar argument that predestination is not the centre of his thought and does not act as a controlling motif; rather, it is the 'catholic' nature of his theology that forms the integrating centre. By 'catholic' Kelly has in mind the totality of Scriptural truth. By means of extensive quotations from Calvin's *opera* Kelly seeks to justify his claim and put to bed all other counter arguments. Likewise, in 'Calvinism in Asia,' Jae Sung Kim simply narrates a history of Calvinism in Asia, especially in Korea, and moves through a general geographical overview of the impact and permutations of Calvinism. While not an unimportant essay, it does seem out of place in this volume and would perhaps have been better presented elsewhere.

While stilted and one of the less engaging papers of the conference due to its subject matter, Richard Gamble's 'Calvin Bibliography' provides an important resource and he is to be thanked for tirelessly compiling a bibliography of books published on John Calvin from the year 2000 to 2009. 'The method employed is a quick look at the overall flow of Calvin's life, followed by a topical analysis of Calvin as theologian, social reformer, and churchman' (p. 419). More than an annotated bibliography, this is a research essay in its own right and is

extremely useful in gaining a comprehensive ‘state of the play’ of Calvin studies over the last decade.

Having been privileged to listen to these essays presented first hand, in Calvin’s historical *Auditoire*, it is now a pleasure to have these in print and collected in one volume for further use and reference. The editor, David Hall, has done a superb job in commissioning the papers in the first place, and seeing them through to completion in such a fine manner. Much of the presentations appear to have had only minor editorial adjustments to them compared to their original delivery, giving the essays a lively feel and tone; a very good move indeed. *Tributes to John Calvin* offers its readers a generous serving of Calvin’s times, themes, and significance and as such promises to be a valuable and well used resource on Calvin scholarship. Read alongside the other volumes in The Calvin 500 Series, this is a major and significant publishing venture and will undoubtedly resource Reformed scholarship until the next major celebratory milestone of Calvin’s life and thought comes along.

Myk Habets
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***Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture.* Eric G. Flett. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 158. Pickwick Publications, 2011. xi + 253 pp.**

Culture is once again a topic of great interest to theologians, with an array of recent works appearing on the topic. Eric Flett, Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Eastern University, completed his PhD, of which this is the published form, in 2004 at King’s College, London, under the supervision of Murray Rae (now Otago University). In this work Flett utilizes the trinitarian theology of the Scottish Reformed theologian Thomas Forsyth Torrance, in order to advance a comprehensive theology of culture which understands God as triune, creation as contingent, and human persons as priests of creation.

Through six chapters Flett introduces Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity (chapter one), a highly nuanced, deeply theological, and richly rewarding doctrinal construction, before examining Torrance’s doctrine of creation (chapters two and three), humanity (chapter four), and finally culture (chapter five). Flett then concludes with his own critical adaptation of Torrance’s theological insights as he constructs his own trinitarian theology of culture (chapter six). An appendix outlining the project and a select bibliography round out the volume.

Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity draws heavily upon Patristic sources and is subsequently mediated through Reformation theology. It is easy to get lost in Torrance’s labyrinthine discussions of trinitarian theo-logic and historical reconstruction, so Flett does well in chapter one to navigate his way through this labyrinth with lucid and consummate ease. He points out the key aspects of Torrance’s theology and always has his eye on his larger project and alerts the reader to the cultural implications of such theology. For instance, Flett is quick to establish that for Torrance, the creative work of the Spirit is proleptically conditioned by redemption, such that “the sanctifying work of the Spirit presupposes the redemptive work of the Son at all points, and both the agency of the Son and that of the Spirit operate according to a single creative logic—towards the realization of God’s *telos*, design, and purpose for the created order” (p. 46). As a consequence of this theology Flett is

able to convincingly establish his thesis that “the incarnation is a union, not only with *human* life, but with the entire ecology of human life, through the vicarious humanity of Christ. The Spirit unites us to *this* human, and unites all creation to *this* humanity. Through this union, the future of the created order is both revealed and secured, and the goal and basis of human cultural activity established” (p. 47). Earlier attempts to adapt Torrance’s theology to an applied end have failed to make the case sufficiently. Flett has more than achieved his goal of showing how Torrance’s trinitarian theology is indeed practical and then how it might be applied.

In chapters two and three, Flett deftly defines, illustrates, and examines Torrance’s doctrine of order in its polyvalent senses. Five key elements of what Torrance means by ‘order’ are given (p. 65), after which a brief definition is provided. The ultimate referent of order is the triune God. Order is then contrasted with Torrance’s sense of contingency, before both concepts are applied with rigour and critical analysis to creation and to human agency within creation. As is well known, Torrance’s interests were supremely in applying theological concepts to natural science. What Flett does, and does well, is to ‘transplant’ Torrance’s trinitarian framework from the natural sciences into the social sciences, specifically culture. And so Flett argues that “Torrance’s reference to natural law as a consequence of the ‘legislative activity of God’ and as signifying ‘the God given normative patterns in the universe’ that have to do with the ‘intrinsic truth or objective intelligibility of contingent being’ is fully congruent with the Pauline language of ‘principalities and powers’ and the way this language has been developed and employed by missiologists and social ethicists in their concerns to describe, engage, and transform human culture” (p. 75). Hence the title of Flett’s book. Flett then brings John Howard Yoder (social ethics) and Lesslie Newbigin (missiology) in for support and shows, rather convincingly to my mind, that Torrance’s concept of order presented alongside that of the ‘powers’ as ‘structures’ promises to facilitate an inter-disciplinary conversation that is necessary to develop a theology of culture that is Trinitarian in nature (p. 76).

In order to articulate Torrance’s anthropology, Flett adopts musical imagery, something Torrance himself adopted at points. Thus we read of humanity as a ‘multi-stringed instrument:’ embodied, personal, and relational; and humanity in need of ‘tuning up and knowing the score:’ here Christ is the ‘tuning fork’ and the Holy Spirit is the one who guides human creatures in their ‘improvisation’ of their calling and vocation. This calling and indeed improvisation is further examined around Torrance’s frequently used images of humanity as ‘mediator of order’ and ‘priests of creation.’ This priestly vocation of mediation is fulfilled through cultural activity, and it is here that Flett develops Torrance’s theology and applies it to a Trinitarian theology of culture.

Chapter five adopts one of Torrance’s key concepts, the ‘social coefficient of knowledge,’ and uses this as a heuristic basis for developing a Trinitarian theology of culture. A social coefficient is one of a number of created coordinates which seek to express or mediate an uncreated fulcrum point. In Christian theology, Christ is the fulcrum point and Israel, Church, universities, and other cultural institutions are the created coordinates. Used in this way, a social coefficient of knowledge has a certain similarity to the concepts of worldview and plausibility structures. According to Flett’s definition, “a social coefficient of knowledge is the social embodiment of a knowing relation. In short, the social coefficient receives from, responds to, and reflects the character of the objective reality it stands in relation to” (p.

142). Used in this way, a social coefficient of knowledge expresses the same kind of social reality that other disciplines refer to as ‘society,’ ‘culture,’ ‘community,’ or ‘tradition.’ Flett analyses Torrance’s use of this term by bringing it into dialogue with the thinking of Peter Berger (sociology) and Paul Hiebert (missiology, cultural anthropology), and offers many helpful illustrations to clarify, especially jazz improvisation, a minor but welcome theme running throughout the volume. What then are social coefficients of knowledge of God for? To “put the human subject in contact with an external world, and upon the basis of this contact to lodge meaning and significance in a place that is external to the self. This is accomplished through socially constructed matrices, with their symbols, rituals, and structures” (p. 167). Ultimately, meaning and significance are found in the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In the final chapter Flett constructs a trinitarian theology of culture proper as he draws the disparate threads of his discussion together. All Christian activity is an aspect of embodied worship in which we glorify God in Christ Jesus. Jesus is our Great High Priest and the Church is a royal priesthood offering our worship in and through Christ. Apart from this relation we know not who we are, apart from this relation we cannot offer *latreia* (service) in gratitude, and apart from this relation we have no knowledge of God or of God’s purposes for the created order. The God of Jesus Christ is the object of knowledge that stands at the centre of the Church and defines both her identity and mission. “If that relation is construed properly, that identity and mission will thrust her into the world as a royal priesthood, whose activity in the world of culture will not only bear witness to the God she worships, but will advance God’s mission in the world through cultural transformation” (p. 222).

The book concludes with a ten page summary in which Flett ‘improvises’ with Torrance’s trinitarian theology in constructing an explicit theology of culture based around the Pauline conception of ‘persons, powers, and pluralities’ (pp. 230-239). Many readers may wish to start with this concise summary and then go back to the beginning. Others may want to simply read this section to get an overview of Flett’s work.

The theology of Thomas Torrance is enjoying wide popularity at present with many PhDs on aspects of his work being published and other secondary literature now appearing more frequently than ever before. In addition there is a T.F. Torrance Theological Fellowship which meets as part of the AAR/SBL conferences and a published journal on his work, *Participatio*. To date Torrance’s epistemology and scientific theology have been rigorously examined, only recently has his theology been explored in critical depth, and now, with Flett’s work, his theology is being applied to areas Torrance himself did not explicitly explore. Flett’s work is thus of great value. It is unfortunate there is no index accompanying the volume, always an oversight with an academic book. Several themes introduced by Flett did not receive the attention they could have, especially the notion of the vicarious humanity of Christ, essential, one would have thought, for a theology of culture in which Christ is the “Archimedean point.” While the idea of humanity as “priests of creation” was summarized, the concept lacked critical interaction and development, especially with others who use this phrase to good effect. Finally, I would have expected the final chapter to provide far more examples of how this trinitarian theology of culture could be applied to a range of social coefficients, in order to more rigorously apply and illustrate the concepts under discussion.

Nonetheless, Flett's work has laid the foundations for a new trinitarian theology of culture and I for one look forward to seeing how Flett and others build upon it as it bears fruit in the world.

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***A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes.* Anthony N.S. Lane. Baker Academic, 2009, 174 pp.**

Anthony Lane (Professor of Historical Theology, London School of Theology) is one of the leading Calvin scholars working today and has established a reputation for his articulate, precise, and exhaustive knowledge of Calvin, his contexts, sources, and theology. Over numerous books and articles Lane has proved himself a reliable and sympathetic reader of Calvin's thought, and yet as a first rate scholar he is able to turn the critical spotlight on Calvin and show where and how his theology is as much a product of his time as it is prophetic to his time. In this work Lane provides a 'reader's guide' to the 1559 edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as it is found in the McNeill-Battles English translation (Westminster, 1960). As such this work is to be used specifically in conjunction with this English translation, with page numbers matching that work.

What is a reader's guide? It is a brief outline, summary, comment, and direction through the four large books of the *Institutes* and the eighty chapters contained therein. For each Book and for each Chapter Lane provides a concise introduction which outlines the context and content of this part of the *Institutes*. This in itself is an extremely useful resource for those new to the work and a good reminder for those more familiar with it. For each major section Lane also provides a few questions to help focus the student as they read through the selected portion of the *Institutes*. Next follows summaries of each Section and select paragraphs, indicating which paragraphs to read from the *Institutes* and which to skip due to their historically localized nature or polemical content which is not essential reading today. In addition to these features Lane makes lucid and succinct comments on a variety of issues including theology, history, and the reliability or otherwise of the Battles translation, its footnotes, and other detailed features. The volume concludes with a two-page appendix which is a 'Table of Reading Lengths' which tells approximately how many pages of the McNeill-Battles edition of Calvin's *Institutes* are covered in each reading Lane has included. On average each reading is a manageable eighteen pages.

To take one example to illustrate how the work proceeds consider *Institutes* 1.6-9, 'The Bible and the Holy Spirit' (pp. 42-48). Lane provides a one paragraph introduction which summarizes chapters 6-9, followed by the following Questions to ask as the *Institutes* are read:

Why do we need the Bible (1.6)? How does the Spirit bear witness to the Word, and what part does rational argument play in this (1.7-8)? How should we react to alleged manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1.9)? (p. 43.)

Then follows the summaries of the selected paragraphs of these sections, namely: 1.6-7; 1.8.1, 13; 1.9. On *Institutes* 1.6.2 he comments: 'The importance of Scripture and our need to

study it. Calvin refers to the world as a theatre, even before Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage";' (p. 43). On *Institutes* 1.7.4 we read:

Notice the first two sentences. Arguments of the authority of Scripture have some value but do not suffice. If we are to have the certainty that we need, we require the "secret testimony of the Spirit" (sentence before footnote 12). In paragraph 2, we see why arguments do not suffice (see the first sentence). Arguments give birth to probable opinions, not to the certainty of fait. In the section after footnote 14, especially observe the reference to Isaiah, which gives us the heart of Calvin's case. Until the Spirit illumines our minds, we ever waver among many doubts (last sentence). (p. 45.)

One can see how Lane acts as a guide through the *Institutes*, bringing in ripe observations and informed scholarship, yet never allowing his own voice to eclipse that of Calvin's.

Lane designed the *Reader* to be used in classes on Calvin to aid teachers in getting students into the *Institutes* and actually reading it for themselves. The division of the readings into eighteen pages and the succinct comments Lane provides to guide readers through the work are brilliantly devised and most welcome. There is no doubt this text will be widely used in classrooms around the globe. Lane has done the academy a service in showing how a good reading course on the *Institutes* can proceed and as such has saved many of us a lot of time. I for one will turn to this book whenever students ask me to take them through the *Institutes* either in private reading groups or as part of a taught course. Now for Baker to contract someone to do the same with Barth's *Church Dogmatics*!

Myk Habets
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***Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey.* Declan O'Byrne. Studies in Theology, Society and Culture Series 4. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010, xii + 260 pp.**

The theology of Father David Coffey is relatively unknown to many in the theological guild and yet, for those who have interacted with his work, it is full of profound insights and wisdom. It is therefore most welcome to see this published PhD on Coffey's work by a critical, yet sympathetic reader – Declan O'Byrne.

Coffey is an Australian Roman Catholic theologian who trained and worked for most of his life in Australia at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. Between 1964-1966 Coffey studied theology at the University of Munich under Karl Rahner and Michael Schmaus. In the late 1990s Coffey spent some time in the United States in various lectureships before occupying the William J. Kelly, S.J. Chair in Catholic Theology at Marquette University from 1995 until his retirement in 2005. Coffey has been a significant voice in the areas of Spirit Christology and Trinitarian studies and continues to speak and publish in theology. Coffey was appointed Professor Emeritus at Marquette in 2006.

In the Foreword to the work Coffey laments the lack of scholarly interaction with his work and applauds O'Byrne for his efforts. The Foreword by Coffey and the acknowledgments by O'Byrne clearly indicate Coffey's approval of O'Byrne's reading of his work and as such, one may read this book as a form of approved or official critique. This has

strengths and weaknesses of course. The Foreword also provides a potted summary of Spirit Christology, as Coffey conceives of it, for the uninitiated. For this alone it is a useful work.

The central rationale of the book is an examination of Coffey's claim that a properly formulated Spirit Christology demands a reformulation of trinitarian theology itself. The Introduction provides a biographical sketch of Coffey and situates his theology within the broader canvass of theology post-Vatican II. Chapter One examines Coffey's Christology, Chapter Two examines two central theses of Coffey's Spirit Christology and especially examines the contention for an incarnation of the Holy Spirit; Chapter Three his pneumatology, and in Chapters Four and Five his doctrine of the Trinity: Chapter Four focuses on Coffey's adaptation of Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, while Chapter Five focuses on Coffey's two-model approach to the Trinity. A Conclusion rounds out the work. As O'Byrne states, Coffey's work "may, to be sure, be read as an expression of the recent 'revival' of trinitarian theology, but I argue that it is better understood as an attempt to take a further step in trinitarian theology" (p. 25). O'Byrne is correct in this assessment and this accounts for why the book follows Coffey's own ascending methodology in which he starts with Spirit Christology, then develops a pneumatology, and finally re-examines the doctrine of the Trinity.

Throughout chapters two and three, O'Byrne presents two basic premises of Coffey's Spirit Christology, namely, what O'Byrne refers to as Thesis A: "Jesus is brought into being as the divine Son in humanity through the Father's radical bestowal of love, which love is the Holy Spirit," and Thesis B: "the response of Jesus is a love for the Father which ultimately is a return of the same Spirit" (p. 28). The two statements from Coffey are then analyzed, the first is said to be uncontroversial, that the Father loves Jesus as the Holy Spirit; the second, however, is Coffey's unique contribution to this discussion; that Jesus' response of love to the Father *is itself the Holy Spirit* (p. 80). Further, "the story of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying action through the life of Jesus is read by Coffey as a kind of 'incarnation' of the Holy Spirit" (pp. 84-5). O'Byrne examines this radical suggestion of Coffey's by way of an adoption into his theology of Rahner's transcendental christology, and seeks to defend it against its ardent critics (namely Paul Molnar and Neil Ormerod). Allied to this concept is another one Coffey brings to his theology, a "theandric" christology, whereby Coffey means that Jesus is divine in a human way as a result of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Chapter Three concludes with a summary of Coffey's argument that classical theology from Augustine onwards has stressed a common love model of the Trinity whereas he proposes a mutual love theory as being more biblically adequate. A mutual love model demands an ascending theology as opposed to a descending model privileged in classical theology. Both, for Coffey are biblical and legitimate, but both are required, not one or the other.

Moving from Christology to the Trinity Coffey forcefully argues that "Spirit Christology provides our best mode of access to the theology of the Trinity" (p. 155). Coffey critically accepts Rahner's *Grundaxiom* but then develops it in a creative way. In place of the Rahnerian economic-immanent diad Coffey proposes "a three-stage itinerary for trinitarian theology" by which one moves from the biblical witness to the immanent Trinity and only then to the economic Trinity. According to Coffey, this safeguards theology from flights of philosophical fantasy over the immanent Trinity and ensures that all talk of the Trinity is rooted in Scripture (the Spirit Christology and ascending christology developed earlier), while yet having its focus on God in the world, and thus on practical theology. O'Byrne never

really deals critically with this suggestion but summarizes it and accepts it as an advance on the tradition. It is unclear, however, how the biblical Trinity is not the economic Trinity, or why such a three-stage itinerary is such an advancement over the existing diad. As long as Rahner's *Grundaxiom* is critically adopted (that is, the vice-versa is deleted), then it functions in the same way as Coffey's alternative, but ultimately incoherent, suggestion.

If a Spirit Christology cannot be adequately defended and illustrated in a doctrine of the immanent Trinity then it is not legitimate, argues Coffey, and so Chapter Five is a detailed survey of Coffey's doctrine of the immanent Trinity. In dialogue with classical trinitarianism O'Byrne shows how Coffey's theology raises issues regarding the *taxis* of the Trinity and the *filioque*. Coffey's two central theses: Thesis A: "Jesus is brought into being as the divine Son in humanity through the Father's radical bestowal of love, which love is the Holy Spirit," and Thesis B: "the response of Jesus is a love for the Father which ultimately is a return of the same Spirit" appears to force Coffey to both accept on the one hand and reject on the other both the traditional *taxis* and the *filioque*. If this is the case then his theology is, ultimately, incoherent. Coffey's solution is to posit two models of the immanent Trinity. These two models parallel the approaches of a *Logos* Christology (the descending model of John), and a Spirit Christology (the ascending model of the synoptics). As Coffey's Spirit Christology is intended to complement a *Logos* Christology then, he argues, two trinitarian models are required as well. As justification for this Coffey argues these are ultimately not different approaches to Christology but refer to different phases in the economy of salvation. The first is a "mission scheme" and the second a "return scheme," both of which account for Coffey's two models, the "procession model" and the "return model" of the immanent Trinity. According to Coffey, the first model is completed in the second while the second model depends upon the first model for coherence. In this way he is able to both affirm the classical *taxis* and *filioque* and offer creative alternate suggestions. Whether this works in the final analysis is not adequately asked by O'Byrne, but is, simply adopted. Various alternate suggestions by Boff and Weinandy are canvassed, but only to illustrate the supposed superiority of Coffey's position. A more critical dialogue here would have been welcomed.

One of the criticisms of this work is that O'Byrne is far too sympathetic a reader of Coffey's theology. When he does alert the reader to criticisms of his theology by Neil Ormerod and Paul Molnar, for example, he dismisses their respective critiques far too quickly and in the process glosses over major issues that do need to be examined. Molnar accuses Coffey of having an adoptionist Christology throughout his work, along with Nestorian tendencies. O'Byrne's defense is merely to suggest that Molnar is using too blunt an instrument here and not recognizing the sophistication of Coffey's theology (e.g. p. 105). But this is hardly the case. Ormerod suggests that Coffey does not adequately define his use of "person" and "nature" and that his suggestions of a theandric Christ are confusing. I share Ormerod's critique at this point and so I was looking for O'Byrne to engage his arguments robustly and comprehensively. While O'Byrne acknowledges Coffey's language here is not developed, he defends his theology on the basis that Ormerod is taking one point out of context and not seeing the whole argument in context (e.g. p. 110). But this is hardly the case for Molnar or Ormerod.

Declan O'Byrne has presented Coffey's theology in its best light and has offered the scholarly community a very easy way into Coffey's often complex thought. This is an honest study which shows the contours and trajectory of one of the finest yet least noticed Roman

Catholic theologians of the late twentieth-century. O'Byrne's work opens up Coffey's insights for a wider community and is a very useful contribution to contemporary trinitarian studies.

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***Perspectives on the Ending of Mark.* David Alan Black (ed.). Broadman & Holman, 2008, 145 pp.**

This volume is a collection of papers originally presented at a conference titled, "The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?" that met April 13-14, 2007 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. Indeed, four varying perspectives are given on Mark 16:9-20. The book reveals the confusion and crisis of confidence that exists among evangelicals with regard not only to Mark's ending but also, more generally, to the received text of Scripture.

Dan Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary, a passionate advocate of "reasoned eclecticism," gets the conversation started in the first chapter, titled, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion of the Second Gospel" (pp. 1-39). Wallace, perhaps the foremost neo-evangelical scholar on textual matters, begins by saying that one's conclusions on Mark's ending are necessarily driven by his presuppositions. Those unwilling to see Mark ending at 16:8 are guided (1) by a dogged commitment to Matthean priority (i.e., unwilling to believe that Mark would have omitted the information in Matthew 28); (2) by one's views on "*the whole field of textual criticism*" (p. 5) (perhaps implying that Majority text advocates will never see the light on this); and (3) by "bibliology" (p. 5). Here Wallace says plainly, "I don't hold to the doctrine of preservation" (p. 7). More on this later.

Also of interest here is Wallace's own autobiographical account of how he started his academic career under the influence of Majority text and Griesbach Hypothesis (Matthean priority) men like Harry Sturz of Biola and Zane Hodges of Dallas. Then, while leading a doctoral seminar on textual criticism as a student at Dallas he made "the enormously painful methodological shift" to reasoned eclecticism (p. 8). He adds, "Credit needs to go to Darrell Bock as one who was instrumental in my shift" (p. 8, n. 14). He continues: "Two months after my text-critical foundation had crumbled, I abandoned Matthean priority" (p. 8). Wallace concludes:

What changed were not the arguments, but my presuppositions. I came to the deep conviction that evangelical scholars must be in the business of pursuing truth, regardless of where it takes us, rather than protecting our presuppositions. This has been the most liberating conclusion I've ever drawn in my academic career (p. 9).

This comment is curious. Is Wallace really implying that only those who practice reasoned eclecticism are "in the business of pursuing truth"? Do reasoned eclectics really make no attempt to protect their presuppositions while others slavishly bury their heads in the sand when they meet evidence contrary to their assumptions? My experience is that reasoned eclectics hold just as dogmatically to their presuppositions as anyone else.

Moving on to examination of the text itself, Wallace gives most of his time to the external evidence (leaving the internal evidence argument against the authenticity of 16:9-20

to Keith Elliot's later chapter). In attempting to understand why a handful of manuscripts do not have the so-called "long ending," Wallace concludes that it makes more sense to think that someone added vv. 9-20 to Mark (ending at v. 8), rather than that someone intentionally omitted it. Thus, he advocates the "short ending" at 16:8. The "major textual upheaval" at the end of Mark with the long ending (vv. 9-20), the so-called intermediate ending (after v. 8 in the Latin Codex Bobbiensis), and the Freer Logion at v. 14 (in Codex W) could only have come about because "scribes were uncomfortable with a Gospel ending without any Resurrection appearances" (pp. 27-28). He concludes: "If the internal evidence on behalf of the LE looks at all suspect, we should consider the matter closed: Mark's Gospel did not originally have vv. 9-20" (p. 29).

Finally, drawing on the work of J. Lee Magness's *Marking the End: Sense and Absence in the Gospel of Mark* (and against N. Clayton Croy's *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel*), Wallace argues for the validity of Mark's intentionally ironic ending of his Gospel at 16:8. Thus, Mark "leaves off the ending precisely to draw the reader *into* the story" (p. 38).

The conversation continues in the second chapter titled, "The Long Ending of Mark as Canonical Verity" (pp. 40-79), which comes from Byzantine text advocate Maurice Robinson of Southeastern Baptist Seminary. Robinson begins by noting that although the ending of Mark has been considered a "flash-point" in the past one hundred and fifty years, the last twelve verse segment "has appeared unchallenged within the main text of nearly all Bible and manuscripts over the past 1,600 years" (p. 41). The significance of the textual problem and its resolution, he says, "may be less notable and consequential than the endless discussions over the past centuries have made it appear" (p. 41). He then sketches the four textual possibilities for the ending of Mark (pp. 41-42):

1. Short ending at 16:8 (supported by Sinaiticus; Vaticanus; and 304).
2. Intermediate ending following 16:8 (supported by Bobbiensis alone; a few others have the intermediate ending alone with vv. 9-20).
3. Long ending concluding at 16:20 (supported by "all remaining continuous-text MSS, lectionaries, and most versional witnesses").
4. Long ending with expansion following 16:14 (supported by the so-called Freer Logion in W).

Robinson also point out that from the nineteenth century scholarly opinion favored the "lost ending" hypothesis, while in more recent days "the critical viewpoint has shifted to deliberate termination at 16:8 as reflecting authorial intent" (p. 43; cf. e.g., Wallace's view). Robinson states that were the long ending not absent from codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, then "the current dispute quickly would evaporate. The conjoint testimony of these two MSS remains the eclectic touchstone...." (p. 77).

Though Robinson is convinced by the external evidence alone, he does devote attention to the internal evidence as well. He weighs the arguments on "the alleged 'non-Markan' style and vocabulary of the LE" and finds them wanting" (pp. 59 ff.). Robinson points out that "overcounts" in tallies of supposed non-Markan usage in 16:9-20 are suspect, since "in most writers these exist primarily to embellish an *a priori* view of LE non-authenticity based primarily on its absence from MSS *Aleph* and B" (p. 62, n. 88).

Of note here is Robinson's reference to various studies that have examined passages of similar length to 16:9-20 (see pp. 65-66). He cites John Broadus's study of 15:44-16:8; John Burgon's of 1:1-12 and 1:9-20; and Bruce Terry's of 15:40-16:4. All of these reveal findings that are no more inconsistent with typical Markan usage than that which is found in 16:9-20. This suggests "that far less is gained from vocabulary and stylistic analysis than often is claimed. Appeals to 'Markan style' or 'Markan vocabulary' thus appear problematic, and rest upon data more coincidental and transitory than substantial" (p. 66).

Robinson concludes with a helpful fifteen-point summary of his argument for the canonical veracity of 16:9-20 (pp. 74-76). Among these, he points out that the so-called long ending has been "ecclesiastically recognized and canonically accepted from at least the mid-second century to the time of the Enlightenment" (p. 77). He concludes that it is "the *only* fitting conclusion to Mark's Gospel" (p. 78).

Keith Elliot, a "thoroughgoing eclectic" from the University of Leeds, contributes chapter three, "The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?" (pp. 80-102). Elliot begins by noting that "the beginnings and ends of ancient books were particularly vulnerable" (p. 81). He not only sees the ending of Mark as secondary but also its beginning (even though it has no outstanding textual difficulties!).

In his discussion of the external evidence with regard to Mark's ending, Elliot cedes Robinson's point that most modern scholars take issue with 16:9-20 primarily because it is omitted in the two manuscripts on which "most critical editions of the Greek New Testaments and most modern English versions" rest (p. 82). Such scholars would conclude that "we are not dealing with any two MSS, but with Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, splendidly produced and evidently prepared as *deluxe* editions" (p. 82). Without strong external evidence—outside Sinaiticus and Vaticanus—why is the ending of Mark challenged? According to Elliot, "the answer is that the contents and theology of vv. 9-20 are uncharacteristic of Mark elsewhere" (p. 87).

Not surprisingly for a thoroughgoing eclectic, the issue turns on internal evidence. Elliot sees 16:9-20 as "an inferior piece of writing, plodding and grey, compared with Mark's racy, simple, and colloquial writing elsewhere" (p. 91). Thus, he is "unwilling to credit Mark with the incorporation of this previously composed ending into his new Gospel" (p. 91). Unwilling to see Mark ending his gospel with 16:8, Elliot speculates that the original ending was lost and 16:9-20 "concocted" as an alternative (p. 94). He even speculates that the "lost" ending included a Christophany to Peter (p. 96). Elliot concludes his chapter with a broadside against the doctrine of inerrancy: "The sooner the language of inerrancy is dropped in the context of textual criticism the better" (p. 101).

The final perspective comes from the editor, David Alan Black, also of Southeastern Baptist Seminary in a chapter titled, "Mark 16:9-20 as Markan Supplement" (pp. 103-123). Black tips his hand at the outset, noting he is "absolutely convinced that the Longer Ending (Mark 16:9-20) is original based on the external evidence, and that it deserves the canonical status it has enjoyed throughout church history" (p. 103). He argues that "Mark originally ended his Gospel narrative (comprised of the actual words of Peter) at 16:8 and then later supplied the last twelve verses himself as a suitable conclusion" (p. 104).

Black offers this theory based on his unique solution to the Synoptic Problem. He postulates that Matthew was written first, then Luke under the influence of Paul, Mark under the influence of Peter, and, finally, John. The Gospel of Mark, as dictated by Peter, originally ended at 16:8, but then Mark added vv. 9-20 as “an act of piety to the memory of Peter” and “to round off the final discourse” (p. 120). Mark served as a bridge between Matthew and Luke, whose “principal function” was “to introduce Luke to the Christian public and to confirm its equality with Matthew” (p. 122). Black concludes that we need not doubt 16:9-20’s place in Holy Scripture, “even if it is Mark’s supplement to Peter’s account of the life of Jesus” (p. 122).

The book’s concluding chapter comes from Darrell Bock of Dallas Seminary, “The Ending of Mark: A Response to the Essays” (pp. 124-141). Bock, not surprisingly given Wallace’s comment that he “credits” Bock with his conversion to reasoned eclecticism, acknowledges at the outset that he holds “to the shorter ending of Mark as original” (p. 124). Thus, he does not see 16:9-20 as original, nor does he accept Black’s idea of it as a Markan addition.

Bock consoles the conservative reader, however, by reassuring us that although the long ending of Mark is not original, it is “*for the most part*” consistent with what is taught elsewhere in the New Testament (p. 125). He continues: “This observation is important because it means the presence or absence of this text does not impact the core of Christian teaching at all” (p. 125).

In his observations on method, Bock says there are three potential forks in the road one might take that determine the destination one reaches in investigation of Mark’s ending: one’s view of the Byzantine text, one’s take on the synoptic problem, and how one weighs internal versus external evidence (p. 126). He denounces the prejudice of some Majority text advocates like Wilbur Pickering who come to the text with “*a priori* rhetoric” (p. 126). According to Bock, “It is this kind of unnuanced, oppositional thinking about such issues that does not advance discussion,” and he praises the contributors to this volume for their irenic tone (p. 126). Bock is critical of what he calls “brittle fundamentalism” (pp. 126-27). Interestingly, he does not also caution *against a priori* eclectic rhetoric or “brittle liberalism.”

In his discussion of external evidence with regard to Mark’s ending, Bock says “the idea that discussion for the shorter ending is hypnotized by Aleph and B is misleading” (p. 128). He argues, for example, that “a significant variety of witnesses show that the shorter reading was widespread in the earliest period” (p. 128), despite the fact that the short ending is attested in only three Greek manuscripts: Aleph, B, and 304. This is a point Elliot readily conceded! Bock appeals to the geographic distribution of the “intermediate ending” to prove his point that “we are dealing with more than Aleph and B” (p. 129).

When it comes to internal evidence, Bock agrees with Wallace that Mark ends at 16:8. According to Bock, “Mark leaves the reader with a choice” (p. 136). To him the short ending makes more sense than Elliot’s proposal of a lost ending and offers a more cogent explanation for the later non-Markan addition of the long ending. Thus, he takes “the internal evidence to be key. It is more likely that the original existence of the short reading explains why we have the longer reading and the other variant endings of Mark than the other way around” (p. 137).

In Bock's conclusion to this collection of essays, he again makes the point that "there is no central teaching of the Christian faith at stake in which view is chosen" on the ending of Mark (p. 141). He continues: "As instructive and interesting as this problem is, we should not make more out of the debate than what it deserves. The long and short of it is this: whatever choice we make, it should not significantly alter our faith" (p. 141). It appears that Bock wishes to make textual criticism an a-theological task. But can this really be done? Bock maintains that "no central teaching of the Christian faith" is at stake. Is this true? Does not this discussion have relevance for the doctrine of providence, particularly with regard to divine preservation of Scripture? Does it not have significance for the doctrine of Scripture itself, including areas such as canon, sufficiency, and inerrancy? Have not the writers of these essays—most particularly those who advocate the short ending of Mark—raised these very doctrinal issues in their writing?

What about Dan Wallace's open rejection of the doctrine of Scriptural preservation? Is this not a confessional issue? Wallace certainly sees it as such. He consciously rejects the doctrine of preservation as "first formulated in the Westminster Confession (1646)" as having "a poor Biblical basis" (p. 7). He continues: "I do not think that the doctrine is defensible—either exegetically or empirically" adding, "I may be wrong in my view of preservation, but this presupposition at least keeps the door open for me for all the options in Mark 16" (p. 7). This apparently includes the option of expelling Mark 16:9-20 from the canon of Scripture. Is this not a serious doctrinal issue (cf. Rev 22:18-29)?

The comments of Keith Elliot touching on the doctrine of Scripture are even more alarming. Elliot contends that textual problems with Mark's ending as well as the general "fluid text in much of the New Testament as a whole makes talk of inerrancy, as narrowly defined by some, indefensible" (p. 99). Like Wallace, Elliot patently rejects any notion of divine preservation of Scripture. In fact, he says that, "to pretend that their words were transmitted unchanged is stretching credulity to its breaking point" (p. 99). He accuses those who hold to the Majority text or *Textus Receptus* of ignoring "the scientific results of textual criticism as practiced in the past century or more, and such preconceived conclusions alienate academic discussion that depends on open and free inquiry" (p. 99). According to Elliot, concepts such as "divine protectionism, inerrancy, or inspiration (whatever those words are said to mean)" are merely judgments based on "a certain brand of church tradition" (p. 100). He concludes: "The sooner the language of inerrancy is dropped in the context of textual criticism the better it will be for scholarship" (p. 101).

Elliot's views also have an impact on his concept of canon, for "Inerrancy is not coterminous with canonicity" (p. 100). Canonicity does not include the concept of the "particular form" of a book (p. 100). According to Elliot, "The Mark accepted as canonical was the form of the text the person, the individual church, or monastery happened to possess" (p. 100). Scripture has no original, fixed, or clearly identifiable text. Elliot cites his preference in text criticism for seeking what the Munster Institute calls the *Ausgangstext*, "a reconstruction as close as scholarship enables one to get to the possible original, authorial wording but one that explains the starting place from which subsequent existing corruptions arose" (p. 99) Such a reading might be preserved somewhere in the over five thousand surviving Greek witnesses "by sheer chance" but where it is one will never know with certainty (p. 100).

Bock's conclusions about text criticism as a-theological simply do not fit. Neo-evangelical scholars who have embraced the textual methodology of the academy seem intent on throwing off the shackles of "brittle fundamentalism" that hinders their "academic freedom." No concern, however, is expressed for what this "freedom" means for confessional integrity. True academic freedom for a believing scholar comes when he has the security of confessional boundaries. Wallace would have us abandon the doctrine of Scriptural preservation. Elliot takes things several steps further and suggests doing away with inerrancy, canon, and even inspiration. This is much too high a price to pay.

This book provides an interesting discussion of the textual matters relating to the ending Mark's Gospel and will prove a useful resource for those interested in that topic. Perhaps, more significantly, it illustrates what Greg Beale has recently called the "erosion of inerrancy" among evangelicals. If one had no confidence as to what the text of Scripture is, how may one meaningfully claim that it is without error?

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***Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible.* D. C. Parker. The British Library/Hendrickson, 2010, 195 pp.**

This is a book written about a book. Codex Sinaiticus is one of the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Bible (including major portions of both the Old and New Testaments, along with some non-canonical literature). The subtitle's claim that Sinaiticus is *the* oldest Bible, however, is somewhat dubious. Parker himself states, "It stands alone as the oldest surviving complete New Testament, and is one of the two oldest manuscripts of the whole Bible" (p. 1). Nevertheless, no one will debate the fact that Sinaiticus has exerted great influence in the field of Biblical text criticism and has had a significant impact on the modern text of the Bible upon which contemporary vernacular translations have been made. Perhaps most importantly Parker's book reveals the story of how cutting edge digital technology has been used to make this influential ancient book that now physically exists in four places (London, Leipzig, St. Petersburg, and at St. Catherine's Monastery) universally available at the click of a mouse (to access "The Virtual Codex Sinaiticus" go to www.sinaiticus.org).

Parker's book covers a lot of ground. In part it deals with the technology of ancient book production and editing, using Sinaiticus as the prime example. In part, it deals with contemporary Biblical text criticism and the impact of Sinaiticus. In part, it deals with the almost legendary modern history of Sinaiticus' "discovery" and preservation up to the present "high-tech" moment. Here are a few observations on each of these parts:

Parker begins his work with these words, "Codex Sinaiticus is one of the greatest of all books, not only as a Christian production, but within all human culture and book technology" (p. 1). He then adds, "It is to Christian books what Hagia Sophia is to Christian buildings" (p. 1). He describes how this parchment book originally containing the whole Bible in Greek (along with the Apocrypha [but without 2 and 3 Maccabees] and two early Christian books, the Shepherd of Hermes and the Epistle of Barnabas) was copied in the fourth century, somewhere in Asia Minor "by a team of at least three scribes" who later

“revised and corrected their work” (pp. 1-2). It was then extensively revised “by a succession of correctors” (p. 3). At some point, the work was deposited at St. Catherine’s monastery at Sinai. Today, 411 leaves (822 pages) of the estimated original 743 leaves (1486 pages) remain.

Parker concedes that Vaticanus is “generally more reliable” but “as a book it comes second” to Sinaiticus (p. 18). One volume Greek Bibles were rare and expensive to produce in the 4-5th centuries. Sinaiticus is an impressive, over-sized specimen. Parker casts doubt, however, on the speculation that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were two of fifty “de luxe” Bibles commissioned by Constantine (referred to in a passage of Eusebius’ *Life of Constantine*) (see pp. 19-22).

According to Parker, the ancient scribes who copied such works by hand were less “typists or typesetters” than they were “artists” (p. 27).

Parker provides extensive technical discussion of Sinaiticus as a physical document, including the parchment and ink used in its creation and the way in which scribes prepared, did layout, and marked the material in production. Some have suggested three original scribes (Tischendorf) and others four (Milne and Skeat). Sinaiticus has no date affixed. Parker gives an overview of how scholars date ancient documents, concluding, “The best we can say is that the evidence such as it is leads us to believe that Codex Sinaiticus may have been written shortly after the middle of the fourth century” (p. 54).

According to Parker, the “biggest challenge to the producers of Codex Sinaiticus was to decide which books were to be included” (p. 29). He then argues that the formation and determination of the books in the Old Testament canon was analogous to “the process of compilation of a Wikipedia article. The article grows through the changes and additions made by a series of contributors, and the more an article is used the more likely it is to be changed” (p. 32). Sinaiticus is “unique among ancient manuscripts in the number of corrections” (p. 79). It has been altered by later redactors in approximately 27,305 places. Whatever Sinaiticus’ deficiencies, Parker concludes, “But at any rate it remains on the whole what it began as—a majestic vehicle of the biblical text” (p. 117). He even laments “the print era” in which texts have been largely stabilized as “one of textual poverty” (p. 114).

As a side note here, we might appropriately note that this book about a book is itself an attractive print production. The front and back endpapers of the covers include full layout facsimiles of pages from Sinaiticus. There are two sections of attractive, glossy, color photos, highlighting and illustrating points made in the written discussion (e. g., illustration 9-c provides a close-up of the first page of Mark’s Gospel with the correction “Son of God” added over line 2). The book is also illustrated throughout with black and white reproductions of the scribal decorations (like the coronis) in Sinaiticus.

This discussion is primarily taken up in chapter seven, “The Text of the Bible in Codex Sinaiticus” (pp. 93-115). Parker’s comments reflect shifting views on Biblical text criticism, of which he has been in the vanguard. Rather than seeing the task of text criticism as the search for some elusive “original” text, Parker has argued elsewhere that Biblical manuscripts be seen as “living texts,” each relevant in its own right.

In the present work he notes, “The story of biblical research in the past two hundred years has been the story of the recovery of older forms of the text. After many centuries during which the text had always evolved from the previous state to a new one, the early

nineteenth century editors began to work back the other way, making a new stage of the text by going back hundreds of years to the oldest copies” (p. 107). Parker draws an analogy with “period performance of baroque music” in which instrument makers and editors have tried to go back to original sources (p. 107). In text criticism, Sinaiticus has been one of these “oldest copies” to which scholars have attempted to trace the original text.

He briefly discusses examples of the ways in which the Septuagintal text of the Old Testament in Sinaiticus varies from the standard Hebrew Masoretic text (e.g., the LXX of Jeremiah is c. one-eighth shorter than the Hebrew; see pp. 98-99). Moving on to the text of the New Testament in Sinaiticus, Parker begins by making comparison with Codex Vaticanus, noting both similarities and differences between the two. He also provides a brief discussion of several significant readings in Sinaiticus, including the ending of Mark and the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53—8:11).

For Parker, the text of Mark in Sinaiticus “is a perfect witness to the fact that words still had an uncertain place in the text” at the time of its composition (p. 109). The ending of Mark at Mark 6:8 in Sinaiticus is a “snapshot of the tradition,” before the later universal harmonization of the text that would expand Mark’s ending (p. 110).

As for the *pericope adulterae* (omitted in Sinaiticus), Parker says “there is no compelling reason why anyone would choose to omit it, but every reason why such a story, once it became popular, should get added” (p. 110). Its omission in Sinaiticus and its addition in other texts, Parker says, is testimony to the fact that the “written Gospels were not treated as fixed entities to be revered as they have come to be in some quarters, especially since the Protestant Reformation” (p. 111).

One of the most valuable and interesting aspects of this work is Parker’s revealing discussion of how Sinaiticus was “discovered” by the nineteenth century scholar Constantin von Tischendorf and how the largest portion of it was acquired by Russia and then by the British Library. Parker astutely demythologizes much of the legendary lore related to Tischendorf’s supposed rescue of the ancient document from the monks at St. Catherine, who, Tischendorf claimed, were about to use it as kindling for their fire until he intervened. Parker bluntly concludes, “one cannot take Tischendorf’s account at face value” (p. 131). He adds, “His account asks us to believe a remarkable thing, namely that having looked after this precious manuscript for centuries, the monks were finally destroying it just at the moment—happy coincidence—when a savior arrived from the West” (p. 131). He traces its disputed acquisition by the Russians concluding that the history is “far more complex” than previously known (p. 147). He also provides a narrative of the British Library’s controversial acquisition of the largest portion of Sinaiticus from the communist government of Russia in Depression era 1934 for the unheard of price of 100,000 pounds making it “the most expensive book in the world” (p. 157). Parker provides numerous anecdotes along the way, including the claim by C. Simonides that he had forged Sinaiticus (pp. 151-152). Indeed, “Codex Sinaiticus has never been far from the headline” (p. 157). Parker is to be commended for providing what is likely the most factually accurate, up to date, and best documented narrative of the modern history of Sinaiticus that is now available.

The final part of this work is a discussion of the online Codex Sinaiticus Project. This certainly represents a most significant shift in the history of the preservation of this document and of other ancient texts. Parker notes three previous revolutions in textual

reproduction: (1) the shift from majuscule to minuscule script; (2) the replacement of written manuscripts with print; and (3) the introduction of photographic facsimiles (p. 167). He then adds, “Today we are in the early stages of the most momentous revolution since the days of Gutenberg and the pioneers of the Greek printed book, the invention of the electronic book, and in particular the web-based edition” (p. 168). Up to the present, Parker notes that only two persons had ever “read every word of what is now extant in Codex Sinaiticus and examined leaves in all four locations” (p. 178; one assumes that Parker is one of these two persons). Now it is virtually available for anyone to read and examine.

What are the ramifications? Parker notes that as more manuscripts are made available digitally, scholars will be able better directly to study and understand the earliest copies. They will be less reliant on secondary sources. All scholars will have equal access to the primary material. Perhaps his most radical prophecy: “Within the churches, it seems likely that the autocracy of single forms of the text will be weakened” (p. 169).

Parker concludes:

The handwritten Codex Sinaiticus is one of the most important copies, made at one of the most important stages in the whole history of copying, and is one of the most important survivals from the past. What role will the digital Codex Sinaiticus play in the future of the Biblical text? The most exciting thing is that we do not know. As we complete this online edition, almost precisely 150 years after Tischendorf’s dramatic third visit to St. Catherine’s [in 1859], we can be sure of the continuing power of the real Codex Sinaiticus and its history to fascinate and to inspire (p. 183).

Parker’s book is pitched to the level of a popular audience. It provides the most accessible and up to date views on Sinaiticus for non-specialists. Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus have been the heavyweight texts used to undermine the traditional text of Scripture and promote the modern critical text. Parker’s efforts through this book and most especially through the online Codex Sinaiticus Project will insure that Sinaiticus will continue to draw interest in and exert influence upon our understanding of the text of Scripture for years to come.

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***Bart D. Ehrman & Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue: The Reliability of the New Testament.* Robert B. Stewart (ed.). Fortress Press, 2011, 220 pp.**

This book originated from the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum in Faith and Culture that was held at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on April 4-5, 2008. The forum’s purpose is to present a dialogue between an evangelical Christian and a non-evangelical or non-Christian. The topic of the 2008 forum was “The Textual Reliability of the New Testament.”

After an introduction, the content of the book includes a transcript of the public dialogue (not debate) that took place on April 4, 2008 between Daniel Wallace of Dallas Seminary, representing the evangelical perspective, and Bart D. Ehrman of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, representing the non-evangelical position. It also includes four papers

that were presented on the topic as part of the Greer-heard Forum (including ones authored by leading Biblical text critics Michael Holmes and David Parker). Finally, it includes three additional essays that were not part of the original forum.

As the book's title indicates the central focus of the forum (and therefore the book) was the dialogue between Ehrman and Wallace. Ehrman is clearly the rock star in this dialogue. He is a self-described former evangelical who claims that his faith ran aground when he discovered the uneven history of the textual transmission of the New Testament as a graduate student at Princeton. Ehrman went on to write the groundbreaking scholarly work *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford University Press, 1993), which argued that orthodox scribes altered the transmission of the text of Scripture to suit their polemical purposes. He has since written a series of popular works on text criticism and Christianity that have attacked the authority and reliability of Scripture (e. g., *Misquoting Jesus*). Wallace is much less well known outside evangelical circles, but he is considered the foremost evangelical New Testament text critic of our day. As evidence of this, Wallace was asked to present one of only two plenary addresses to the 2008 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society when the annual theme was on textual criticism.

From his opening remarks, it is clear that Wallace is in awe (envy?) of Ehrman's professional accomplishments. At times he almost fawns over Ehrman (cf., e. g., his opening lines: "Bart, as I expected, your presentation was energetic, informative, and entertaining. It was vintage Bart Ehrman" [p. 27]). In the audience q and a session, Wallace actually states, "I think that what Bart has done for the Christian community is a great service" (p. 47). His point was that he admires Ehrman for exposing not just the general population, but also Christians, in particular, to disputed textual issues in the New Testament like the *comma johanneum* (John 7:53—8:11). From an orthodox position, however, it strikes one as strange that Wallace would so enthusiastically praise a man who has so brazenly attacked and attempted to undermine the authority and reliability of Christian Scripture. Certainly civility should be the rule for such interactions, but Wallace goes beyond good manners and essentially capitulates to Ehrman. One of the more bizarre moments recorded in the dialogue also came from the q and a when an audience member asked Wallace about the propriety of preaching from John 7:53-8:11. Wallace responded, "Those are great and very practical questions that Bart can answer far better than I, so I'll turn to over to him" (p. 57). Ehrman then gave the deadpan reply, "No. I would not preach on that." The transcriber adds: "*Audience roars with laughter*" (p. 58). It is hard to figure what Wallace was thinking in deferring to Ehrman, a hardened apostate and agnostic, a question about preaching. Was he trying to be coy, humorous, cute? Though the audience may have laughed, it was hardly amusing. After Ehrman's non-answer, Wallace did finally address the question, concluding, "...should we preach this? I would personally say no" (p. 58).

In the end, the transcript of the dialogue between Ehrman and Wallace comes off rather flat. Few sparks fly. There is little heat or passion expressed in disagreement. The key reason for this is that Ehrman and Wallace actually have very little to disagree about when it comes to textual criticism of the New Testament. Both, in fact, are confirmed "reasoned eclectics" (as are all the other authors in the book) who embrace the modern critical text of the New Testament as descended from liberal Protestant scholarship of the nineteenth century forward (as represented by scholars like Westcott and Hort, Nestle, Aland, and Metzger). No doubt, a much more stimulating exchange would have resulted if either men would have

entered into dialogue (debate?) with a proponent of the Majority Text or of the Textus Receptus or even a King James Version Only-ist.

Both Ehrman and Wallace agree, for example, that disputed passages in the traditional text like the *comma johanneum* (John 7:53-8:11) and the so-called longer ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20) were not part of the authentic, original text of the New Testament. So, Ehrman says John 7:53-8:11 “was not originally in the Bible” (p. 24) and that Mark 16:9-20 was added by later scribes (p. 25). Wallace, likewise, says that the woman caught in adultery is his “favorite passage that’s not in the Bible,” and he agrees with Ehrman that the traditional ending of Mark “is not part of the original text of the Bible” (p. 29).

Wallace, in fact, promotes the replacement of the traditional text by the modern critical text with an almost missionary zeal. He notes, for example, that in his role as New Testament editor of the NET Bible he would have preferred to have relegated the *comma johanneum* to the footnotes. In the end he had to settle for a “compromise” to “put it in brackets, to have a lengthy discussion about why we don’t think it is authentic, and to reduce the font size by two points so that it could not be easily be read from the pulpit” (p. 48). Wallace also makes clear his desire to popularize the findings of modern text criticism among both evangelical ministers and laymen. He notes, “One of the deep concerns I have for the church today is that there is such a huge difference between pulpit and pew and between pulpit and professors. We need to educate our people and let them know that these are the issues that are going on” (p. 59).

In the end, the agreement between Wallace and Ehrman even seems to extend to the matter of the reliability of the New Testament. Ehrman concludes his opening remarks as follows:

Is the text of the New Testament reliable? The reality is there is no way to know. If we had the originals, we could tell you. If we had the first copies, we could tell you. If we had copies of the copies, we could tell you. We don’t have copies in many instances for hundreds of years after the originals. There are places where scholars continue to debate what the original text said, and there are places where we will probably never know (p. 27).

Wallace draws a strikingly similar conclusion: “So, is what we have now what they wrote then? Exactly? No. But in all essentials? Yes” (p. 46).

Both agree that it is impossible to reconstruct the original text of Scripture with absolute certainty. Where do they differ? Ehrman suggests that we simply do not have enough evidence to know what the original text of Scripture contained, and so we must remain agnostic and skeptical. Thus, he can continue to muse about orthodox corruptions. Wallace, however, suggests that while we do not have (and never will have) absolute certainty about the original text of the New Testament we have a modern reconstruction that is close enough for Christians to trust and rely upon.

Beyond this basic agreement, however, there is a very significant issue on which the two divide, namely, a seismic shift that is taking place in contemporary academic text criticism. Mainstream academic scholars are, by and large, abandoning the effort to reconstruct the original autograph. They are less likely to speak about *the* text of Scripture than they are to speak about many valid *texts* of Scripture. Ehrman raises this point in the dialogue when he

says, “I don’t think that there’s any hope of getting closer to an original text.... Ten or fifteen years ago my interests in textual criticism shifted away from trying to figure out what the original is to trying to figure out why the text got changed” (p. 53). He notes that one of the other presenters (David Parker) “has been quite outspoken in his writings in saying we should give up taking about the original text” (p. 53). In other words, when evangelical text critics, like Wallace, attempt to do text criticism in order to reconstruct the original wording, from Ehrman’s perspective, they are doing twentieth century text criticism and not twenty-first century text criticism. In his introduction, Stewart notes, “A debate is raging among New Testament textual critics at the present time” (p. 5). Mainstream academic text scholars like Ehrman, Parker, and Eldon Jay Epp no longer see the recovery of the original text as “an end,” but see the critic’s task as the exploration of manuscripts as “a means, or instrument” to view the early church and understand “how the text came to be as it is, rather than what the text says” (p. 6).

In the remaining articles one sees the widening gap between evangelicals who are continuing to advocate the reconstruction of a text that closely approximates (but never perfectly reproduces) the autograph and non-evangelicals who have abandoned this effort altogether. Here is a brief overview of the remaining articles:

Michael Holmes in “Text and Transmission in the Second Century” (pp. 61-79) asks how well the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament from the second and third centuries reflect the state of the New Testament text from the late first century. He concludes that one finds “a situation characterized by macro-level stability and micro-level fluidity” (p. 78).

In “The Necessity of a Theology of Scripture” (pp. 81-93), Dale Martin criticizes both Ehrman and conservative evangelicals for what he sees as an improper theology of the Bible. If Ehrman had had a proper Bibliology, he would not have abandoned Christianity when he discovered textual problems in the New Testament, because he would not have been looking for textual perfection to verify his faith. If conservatives had a proper theology of the Bible, they would not use “their interpretation of scripture as if it were an infallible statement of scripture that can be used to beat other Christians over the head or slam dunk a theological or ethical debate” (p. 91). The right theology of Scripture, according to Martin, is essentially that of Protestant neo-orthodox liberalism. So, he says, “The Bible simply isn’t Scripture in and of itself. It is the scripture, the word of God, when it is read in faith by the leading of the Holy Spirit” (p. 87). He adds, “Scripture is the Bible, in whatever form a Christian holds it, read in faith, and by the leading of the Holy Spirit” (p. 92).

The “new perspective” on text criticism is placed front and center in David Parker’s article, “What is the Text of the New Testament?” (pp. 95-104). Parker plainly state, “that textual criticism does not have, and never has had, the goal of recovering a text which has the supposed authority of the Author” (p. 103).

William Warren of New Orleans Baptist Seminary authored “Who Changed the Text and Why? Probable, Possible, and Unlikely Explanations” (pp. 105-123). He focuses on why and how scribal errors occurred in textual transmission. Like Wallace he is an evangelical “reasoned eclectic” who denies the authenticity traditional readings like John 7:53—8:11 and Mark 16:9-20. Of Acts 8:37, Warren even observes, “Actually, it’s a shame that some Bible publishers continue to print passages like these variant readings in the text when the overwhelming evidence shows that they were not in the earliest and original form of the

text” (p. 118). In the end, like Wallace, however, Warren can only give this rather lukewarm endorsement of the modern critical reconstruction of the original text (note especially the “almosts”): “I would say that our text almost certainly represents a form that is almost identical to the original documents, but that is a probability statement” (p. 122).

The German scholar K. Martin Heide offers a lengthy technical article “Assessing the Stability of the Transmitted Text of the New Testament and the *Shepherd of Hermas*” (pp. 125-159). Relying on statistical analysis of various texts, Heide concludes, contra Ehrman, that the number of “dogmatically motivated variants” in the New Testament are “relatively low” (p. 158). Though admitting that “the reconstruction of the ‘original Greek’ on a formal level ... remains a phantom,” Heide concludes, “It was and is the great goal of textual criticism to know how the New Testament was read in its original form” (p. 159). Heide’s article shows that there are still German text critics in the Kurt Aland tradition who see value in the effort to reconstruct the original reading.

Craig A. Evans’ contribution is “Textual Criticism and Textual Confidence: How Reliable is the Scripture?” (pp. 161-172). Evans provides a survey of several passages reflecting “significant errors in manuscript transmission” (pp. 162 ff.). Not only does he include consensus passages among modern text critics like John 7:53—8:11 and Mark 16:9-20, but he also conjectures that Matthew 17:51b-53 (the account of some dead being raised at the crucifixion of Jesus) is not authentic despite the fact that the text is undisputed in transmission! Evans concludes: “Given the evidence, we have every reason to have confidence in the text of Scripture. This does not mean that we possess 100 percent certainty that we have the exact wording in every case, but we have good reason to believe that what we have preserved in the several hundred manuscripts of the first millennium is the text that the writers of Scripture penned” (p. 172).

Finally, Sylvie T. Raquel in “Authors or Preservers? Scribal Culture and the Theology of Scriptures” (pp. 173-185) concludes the collection with an essay which argues that Ehrman has a “limited and negative understanding of inerrancy (‘the Bible is without error’)” as opposed to Wallace’s more appealing “open and positive terminology (‘inerrancy is that the Bible is true in what it touches’)” (p. 184). Thus, Ehrman’s criticism of scribal lack of accuracy is anachronistic. Variants “give different shadings to the text but do not transform the essence of the message” (p. 185). The Raquel/Wallace’s re-definition of inerrancy, however, it seems closer to that of Peter Enns, reflecting what Greg Beale has called “the erosion of inerrancy” among evangelicals, than to the framers of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

This book provides intriguing insight into the challenges that exist for evangelicals who have abandoned the traditional text of Scripture and embraced modern text criticism (“reasoned eclecticism” in particular) in an effort to reconstruct a text that best reflects the so-called inerrant autographs. The Ehrman-Wallace interaction, in particular, demonstrates the degree to which mainstream evangelical text critics, like Wallace, have embraced “reasoned eclecticism.” They appear to agree more than disagree. One wonders if evangelical text critics will also follow the trend toward abandoning the reconstruction of the text of Scripture in its original form as the goal of text criticism. What impact will this have on the

way evangelical Christian scholars views the reliability of Scripture, the doctrine of “inerrancy,” and the authority of Scripture in general?

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THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF CHRISTIANITY

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 infinities, 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.