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INQUIRY

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Theology, Culture & History

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# AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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of  
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# AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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## CONTENTS

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### ARTICLES

- “An Overtaking of Depth”: Theology As Retrieval 1  
*Kent Eilers and W. David Buschart*
- Forming a Community of Resistance: Oscar Romero and Joerg Rieger In  
Conversation 21  
*Nathan Cranford*
- C. S. Lewis: The “Real Tussle” of Forgiveness 33  
*Sr. Sheila Galligan, IHM*
- Erwin Panofsky’s Gothic Architecture 41  
*Daniel J. Heisey*
- Beyond Dominion and Stewardship: Humanity and Nature in Puritan Theology 49  
*Sarah Irving*
- The Theological Significance of the Psalm of Lament 61  
*Fr. Gabriel Mendy*
- 

### REVIEW ARTICLES

- Diana Garland and Family Ministry 73  
*Steve Clark*
- A Revolution In Mind: Andrew Newberg’s Principles Of Neurotheology 81  
*Ryan McIlbenny*
- 

### BOOK REVIEWS

- From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* by Ian A. McFarland. 85  
*Terry J. Wright*
- The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* by Stephen R. 87  
*Holmes.*  
*Graydon Cress*
- Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* by Michael J. 89  
*McVicar.*  
*Andrew C. Stout*
- Pascal the Philosopher: An Introduction* by Graeme Hunter. 92  
*Charles M. Natoli*
- Knowledge and Christian Belief* by Alvin Plantinga. 97  
*Todd A. Scacewater*
- Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics  
in Paul’s Letter* by Elliott, Mark W., et al, (eds). 99  
*Warren Campbell*
- 

- ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH 103**
-

## “AN OVERTAKING OF DEPTH”: THEOLOGY AS RETRIEVAL

Kent Eilers and W. David Buschart\*

*The past tense is essential to our language of faith; without it our conversation is limited and thin—and growing thinner all the time.<sup>1</sup>*

*A true revolution is a call from a less perfect tradition to a more perfect tradition, a call from a shallower tradition to a deeper tradition, a backing up of tradition, an overtaking of depth, an investigation into deeper sources.<sup>2</sup>*

Like every facet of the church’s life, theology always begins already in the middle.<sup>3</sup> It is caught in the middle of God’s reconciling activity, drawn along by its current, part of its history. In this sense, Christian theology is a normed practice. Its cadence and grammar are given by the revelation of God in Christ received by the apostles and witnessed in Holy Scripture. What was true for the apostles is thus true for the church today: the initial movement of theological reflection is the astonished response of encountering God’s grace. Indeed, theology springs out from worship and, when healthy, turns us back toward it.

There is a second sense in which theology begins already in the middle. The church’s work of sanctified reason takes shape in the middle of particular cultures, times, and communities. The truth of the Gospel is timeless, but it is always known and expressed within an actual place, time, and people. Such particularity includes, perhaps most importantly, the church. In the church, theological reflection is carried out within the fellowship of Christ’s body, located within a tradition characterized by unique emphases and traits, and simultaneously *draws on* and *contributes to* the church’s worship.<sup>4</sup> There, in worship, theology is reminded that the risen and exalted Christ is gloriously present in the church through the transforming work of his Spirit. Thus the church, and by extension the theologian, does not merely act but is acted upon. The kinds of theologians who seek to be faithful both to the givenness of Christianity and the present moment require the skill best described as *discernment*.

Theology as a task or craft requires discernment—a form of discernment that is as much art as science. That theology requires discernment is true for every sort of theologian: a Christian confronted with a perplexing cultural challenge, a pastor exegeting a difficult text in the lectionary, or a professional theologian teaching university students or training ministers in the seminary. In each case, theological discernment operates in various modes and with a range of overlapping practices. Some Christians manage primarily in a biblical mode, relying heavily on passages committed to memory or the embedded theology of their church. A pastor may interpret a text in an historical mode, inviting congregants into the

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Bendroth, *The Spiritual Practice of Remembering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Péguy, cited in Marcellino D’Ambrosio, “Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition,” *Communio* 18 (Winter 1991): p. 537. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> This essay is adapted from W. David Buschart and Kent D. Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 3.

world “behind” the text. A university professor may adopt a conceptual mode, challenging students to consider unexamined mental frameworks. For each, methodological modes and preferences are in play. One such mode of theological discernment is retrieval.<sup>5</sup>

As we use the term, “retrieval” names a *mode or style of theological discernment* that looks back in order to move forward. It is a particular way of carrying out theological work—what John Webster calls “an attitude of mind”<sup>6</sup>—in which resources from the past are found distinctly advantageous for the present situation. Such resources might include doctrines, practices, a metaphysic or ontology, traditions or the Great Tradition more generally. Theologies of retrieval seek to recover these resources in order to seize an opportunity or respond to a particular challenge. For theologies of retrieval, immersion in the texts, thought forms, and forms of life of the Christian past—whether distant or more recent—are believed to open up fresh opportunities for Christian faithfulness in the present.

It is in this mode of theological discernment that the theologian most transparently shows her awareness that her place is *always already* in the middle. It was Martin Heidegger who argued that our existence (*Dasein*) always finds itself already in the middle of the world and language (*immer schon*),<sup>7</sup> and in his wake this insight has often been refracted and developed by others.<sup>8</sup> We want to make it clear that the strings of our remarks about theology’s in-the-middleness are not tied to Heidegger but to the doctrines of God, salvation, and ecclesiology. God’s triune ever-initiating presence in creation, redemption, and consummation locates Christian existence, and therefore theology, in the position of response to God’s prior, gracious agency. That theology is always performed already in the middle is a feature of its captivation to God’s redeeming activity in Son and Spirit and thus its essentially graced, responsive character as God works within history.

Thus, while the moment at hand faces the theologian with challenges and opportunities, her response is generated by unembarrassed recourse to the doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual assets of the Christian tradition. Such recourse is many times not uncritical, but it is nonetheless caused by the theologian’s mindfulness of her place in the middle of a tradition of faith from which forgotten, lost, or unappreciated resources wait to be recruited. And, more importantly, she is aware of her place in the middle of a community *founded by Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit* whose action to redeem and renew is both ongoing and

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<sup>5</sup> David Ferguson cites retrieval as one among several contemporary approaches to theology: cross-disciplinarity, contextuality, retrieval, articulation of confessional identity, and re-emergence of liberalism (David Ferguson, “Theology Today—Currents and Directions,” in *The Expository Times* 123/3 [2012], pp. 105-112).

<sup>6</sup> John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval” in *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 584. See also John Webster, “Ressourcement Theology and Protestantism,” in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Theology*, eds. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1962).

<sup>8</sup> For example, Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, IL.: Chicago University Press, 1987); Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL.: Chicago University Press, 1984); Ben Quash, *Theology and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

generative of the theologian's own work. That being said, there are varying reasons for why the Christian past is deemed advantageous, a range of factors that contribute to it functioning as an "authority," and a variety of ways those resources are recovered in practice.

The remainder of this essay unfolds in three parts. In the first, we ground retrieval in the basic Christian pattern of receiving and transmitting the deposit of faith. Retrieval in this sense is not unique to our time, but basic and fundamental to Christian theology. The second part introduces six contemporary theologies of retrieval and locates them within the widespread skepticism about the fruits of modernity that characterized much of late twentieth-century theology. The final section presents a range of possible outcomes of retrieval. We suggest that one outcome best characterizes theology as retrieval: *ressourcement*. This outcome demonstrates the effective negotiation of the inherent tensions of retrieval: continuity and discontinuity, stability and change, and constraint and freedom. The term "ressourcement" is well-known for its origin in early twentieth-century Roman Catholic theology, but it has broader applicability. The outcome of *ressourcement* is possible within any Christian community when theological retrieval seeks to receive and transmit the deposit of faith.

### **Receiving and Transmitting the Deposit of Faith**

Theological retrieval is an organic expression of Christianity's long-standing posture of *reception* and *transmission*. Christian identity is tied to canonical texts, locates itself in relation to particular historical events (e.g. the history of Israel, the life of Jesus Christ, the mission of the apostles), and is embodied in a wide range of shared practices carried-on through history (e.g. prayers, community, mission, worship). What precisely Christians receive and pass on is the *deposit of faith*: the belief and proclamation that the promised Messiah is the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Jesus, the Son of God, the fulfillment of the covenant, the hope of the world. And in every historical context the People of God seek to think and live faithfully in relation to this faith.

From the earliest days of the Christian movement, Christian identity was maintained and measured—liturgically, ethically, and doctrinally—by the *reception and transmission* of the deposit of faith. While this dynamic is most prevalent in Paul's letters, it is apparent in the Gospels as well. The opening verses of the Gospel of Luke, for example, indicate that its subject matter is the life and significance of Jesus the Messiah. The Gospel's account of this did not arise directly with its author (presumably Luke) but was "handed down" (*paradidomi*) by eyewitnesses. The inception of this Gospel's witness is forthrightly laid out as an account of Jesus' life that was delivered and, in turn, is being conserved through passing it on again.

In the same spirit, the Apostle Paul repeatedly exhorts the recipients of his letters to respect the deposit of faith. There is a sense in Paul's writings that passing on the traditions of worship, behavior, and belief were fundamental to the formation of Christian identity, what can rightly be called "traditioning."<sup>9</sup> There are three different senses in which he does so. First, Paul meant to hand on certain communal practices that would characterize the Christian community. The celebration of the meal Jesus instituted was the most central.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Edith M. Humphrey, *Scripture and Tradition: What the Bible Really Says* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2013), pp. 26-43.

Sharing a meal in the memory of Jesus was instituted by Jesus himself and Paul sees himself as “passing on” (*paradidomi*) what he had “received” (*paralambano*) (1 Cor 11:23; cf. 1 Cor 11:2). Second, there is an ethical shape to the Christian life and Paul exhorts his readers to conform themselves to it by conforming to the traditions they had received from him. Such forms of life were based on Paul’s teaching, but there is also a sense in which they were modeled for them through the presence of Paul and the apostles: “as you received (*paralambano*) from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more (1 Thess 4:1 NASB; see also 2 Thess 3:6).

Third, Paul refers most frequently to receiving the actual content of the Gospel delivered, content comprised not merely of ideas or even actions but *Christ Jesus himself*. “He is the one we proclaim,” Paul wrote to the Colossians, the “word of God” and the “mystery of God” (Col 1:28, 25, 26 ESV; see also Rom 5:15-17; 1 Cor 4:7; Col 3:16; Gal 1:16). In some cases proclaiming “the gospel” and “preaching Christ” seem to be synonymous for Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17 and 1:23; 1 Cor 15:1, 11 and 15:12; 2 Cor 4:3 and 4:4). To receive the gospel was not fundamentally about intellectual assent or the adoption of its ethic, although both are involved. Rather, to receive the message was to receive “Christ Jesus as Lord” (Col. 2:6 NIV). It was the reception of the work of God through Christ made actual in their midst through the work of the Spirit. “God in Christ is both the source and the content of the gospel.”<sup>10</sup> For Paul, the gospel is not exhausted by whatever intellectual content it might contain. Rather, the gospel message itself “is the divinely powerful instrumentality through which God’s salvation and righteousness are presently revealed.”<sup>11</sup> The intellectual content of the gospel cannot therefore be separated from the personal presence of God in Christ that accompanies its proclamation, its reception, and the union with Christ’s person that the Spirit effects through faith.

Thus, and this is crucially important, the gospel’s authority transcended the apostles who delivered it. In the preaching of the gospel Jesus himself spoke—and speaks still today—as Lord: “And we also thank God continually because, when you received (*paralambano*) the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe” (1 Thess 2:13 NIV). The gospel *is* Jesus Christ, not an inert collection of ideas or practices but the mystery of God brought to life in those who believe through the work of Christ’s Spirit. The grace of God spoke of in the gospel message is “none other than the risen Christ who confronts men through the word of his Gospel.”<sup>12</sup> Naturally then, receiving the deposit of faith entails more than intellectual assent alone but action and, indeed, the gospel brings forth action *from within* those who receive it as the Spirit of God births new life. Having been traditioned in the ways of the gospel, those who receive it are to “guard” it (1 Tim 6:20), “hold fast” to it (1 Thess 2:15), and “contend for it” (Jude 3; see also 1 Cor 1:3).

Just as competing gospels confronted those who received the letters of the apostles, Christians in the ensuing centuries faced challenge as well. At the root of each challenge a

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<sup>10</sup> A.B. Luter, “Gospel,” in *The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel C. Reid (Grand Rapids, MI.: IVP Academic, 1993), p. 370.

<sup>11</sup> Luter, “Gospel,” p. 371.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 1948; 1996), p. 31.



similar dynamic was in play regarding the deposit of faith, even though their historical and theological cultures differed: *reception* and *transmission*. For example, at the close of the first century the unknown author of 1 Clement exhorted the Corinthian church much in the spirit of Paul: “Therefore let us abandon empty and futile thinking, and conform ourselves to the glorious and holy canon of our tradition. Indeed, let us note what is good and what is pleasing and what is acceptable in the sight of him who made us” (7.2-3). Likewise, around 178 A.D., Irenaeus echoed Paul’s language of reception and preservation: “The church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it” (*Against Heresies*, 1.10.2). Competing interpretations of Scripture and new cultural settings have always challenged the preservation of what Irenaeus termed “this faith,” yet the church has consistently sought to identify and maintain the essence of Christian identity. Early in the third century Hippolytus of Rome spoke of an “essence of the tradition which is proper to all the churches” and expounded it through a liturgy and prayer.<sup>13</sup> And later, around 425, Augustine exhorted the catechumens to receive the Rule of Faith which is “scattered up and down” in Holy Scripture, write it on their hearts, and arm themselves with it (“On the Creed to Catechumens”).<sup>14</sup> It was this essence of the tradition that the ecumenical councils later sought to guard through creedal formulations.<sup>15</sup> But even then the task of receiving and passing on the deposit of faith remained. Fresh cultural environments and the passage of time would present fresh opportunities and challenges to fulfilling Paul’s basic injunction to Timothy: “guard what has been entrusted to your care” (1 Tim 6:20).

Examples from every era to the present could illustrate the dynamics of reception and handing-on, guarding and delivering. If we looked more closely we would see that this dynamic is characterized by the ever-present tension of continuity and change, stability and development. Christian teaching developed even from the time of the apostles, and surely into the period of the ecumenical councils, and the tension was always whether such development was *consistent* with the essence of the deposit. Vincent of Lérins (fifth century) spoke of this tension in terms of biological growth: “The understanding, knowledge, and wisdom of each and all—and of the whole Church—ought to grow and progress greatly and eagerly through the course of ages and centuries, provided the advance be within its own lines, in the same sphere of doctrine, the same feeling, the same sentiment.”<sup>16</sup> As the apostolic tradition was transmitted in new settings among fresh challenges and opportunities Vincent sought to navigate the same challenge that Paul’s injunction to Timothy presents to the church: “guard what has been entrusted to your care.” In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, John Henry Newman described the tension between stability and development in terms of the growth of an idea; Hans Georg Gadamer viewed it through the idiom of legal

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<sup>13</sup> Clement, Irenaeus and Hippolytus are all quoted from D. H. Williams, *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church*, ed. D. H. Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, “On the Creed: A Sermon to the Catechumens,” in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. C. L. Cornish (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), p. 369.

<sup>15</sup> See Carl Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2012), chapters 2 and 6; Robert Jensen, *Canon and Creed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Vincent of Lérins, *Communitorium*, in *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*, ed. J. Stevenson and W. H. C. Frend, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012 [1966]), p. 373.

precedent; and Jaroslav Pelikan cast it in terms of the rule of prayer—*lex orandi*.<sup>17</sup> Examples could be multiplied, but it is enough to say that receiving the deposit of faith and delivering it in new times and places is, as it always has been, basic to Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

The point to be noted here is this: theologies of retrieval can only be undertaken and flourish because of this dynamic of reception and transmission, marked by the inherent tension between stability and development. “Conservation” is thus part of Christianity’s DNA as it receives the deposit of faith entrusted to the apostles and delivers it to a world that God is “reconciling to himself in Christ” (2 Cor 5:19). The portrait of the New Testament is clear that receiving the deposit of faith entails more than merely assenting to a particular set of ideas. As we saw just from examples in Paul’s corpus, the intellectual content of the Gospel does not exhaust its real content. Rather, the gospel proclaimed, received, and passed on again is *Christ Jesus himself*. Restoration to God is not effected by an idea or set of ideas but by the person of the Son active and present through the agency of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Receiving and passing on the faith, therefore, entails more than transmitting ideas or, for that matter, an ethical program or cultic regimen.<sup>20</sup> Christians have reduced the gospel to

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<sup>17</sup> See John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), chapter 1; Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 321-336 (Bo Helmich reminded us of this connection); and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1984), 16-17, and *ibid.*, *Historical Theology* (New York, NY: Corpus Instrumentorum and Philadelphia, PA.: Westminster, 1971), pp. 109-110.

In Christian liturgy, even from its very origin, the pattern of reception and development has been present. Gordon Lathrop argues that Christian liturgy has always followed the cadence of reception and *transformation* of received things so they would speak “new grace” in light of Jesus Christ. It is a liturgical cadence Lathrop suggests is embedded in the Bible itself: “Time and again this is the pattern of biblical speech: old structures are used to speak of the new grace... Old texts, old stories and songs are borrowed to speak of the world transformed. Old meal practices and old washing symbolism, our ritual structures, are shaped to speak of Jesus Christ.” According to this deep pattern of Christian liturgy, rituals and symbols are received and then “broken in order to speak of God’s grace” in Jesus Christ (Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* [Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress, 1993], pp. 26, 80).

<sup>18</sup> See Thomas Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2013); Malcolm B. Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007); Alistair E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1997); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1969); *id.*, *Vindication of Tradition*; *id.*, *Credo* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2003); Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*.

<sup>19</sup> The content of the Christian tradition is “not a doctrinal statement, nor a law, nor a book of Revelation, but the very Person of Jesus himself as the incarnate Word of God, giving its authority to the Gospel and to the event of the authoritative Word of faith; and correspondingly we have the Holy Spirit as God’s Presence in the faith-creating Word of preaching. Theology can only speak of ‘Tradition’ in the true sense when it holds to this fundamental point of departure, and lets it have full play...” (Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition*, translated by S.H. Hooke [London: Collins, 1968], p. 145).

<sup>20</sup> The stridently personal and relational nature of Christian worship is brought out well by Lathrop’s reading of Justin’s *Apology*: “Justin does not think of Jesus as merely having a good, anticultic

each of these at various times and places. No, in receiving the gospel the church receives the personal presence of the triune God in the person of Christ as his presence is made actual by the work of the Spirit. The antecedents of Christ's presence in the gospel are found in Israel's experience of God in covenant, tabernacle and temple, and further back still in the act of creation itself as divine gift. Christ fulfills the foretastes of God's presence in each as the true Son of Abraham (Mt. 1:1), the true Son called out of Egypt (Mt. 2:15) and the true temple of God (Jn 2.19-21). Pentecost does not alter this Christological centering, but further establishes it; the Spirit *of Christ* is the one given and the same Spirit who unites us to Christ (Eph. 3.14-19; 1 Jn 3.24). God's self-giving presence orients his people toward the God who descends, Emmanuel, and conditions our understanding of the Gospel we proclaim, receive, and pass along. Nonetheless, the intensely relational, trinitarian nature of the gospel in which God is present in Christ is always at risk of being shorn down to a set of ideas.

There is a sense, therefore, in which the receiving and passing-on posture of Christian identity entails the making of people in every time and place in some way *contemporary* with Jesus. We might even say this is the work the church performs as she "receives" Christ. Rowan Williams puts it this way:

Churches have always been 'conserving' communities: that is, they have always been concerned about the past and about whether they were in some sense doing the same thing as the previous generation had done ... [T]he Christian Church has the added concern of making sure those habits are a way of *bringing believers truthfully and effectively in the presence of a specific past, the incarnate reality of Jesus*. What the Church conserves is seen as important because of this concept of becoming contemporary with Jesus...Without this encounter with Jesus in the days of his flesh and in his life in his corporate Body in history, the believing self remains untouched by transforming grace.<sup>21</sup>

If this is the case, then Christianity, including its theology, is always looking back in order to move forward. In the course of the church's worship, mission, and work of sanctified reason (theology), part of her calling is to receive the deposit of faith and faithfully pass it on in whatever contemporary milieu the church finds herself. Theologies of retrieval intensify this dynamic by adopting a mode of theology that recovers from sites in the Christian past deemed useful (on some accounts, "authoritative") for the contemporary situation. In this way, theologies of retrieval are not doing anything fundamentally novel; rather they *intensify* an element of Christian theological method present from its inception.<sup>22</sup>

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idea, which then can be passed on by philosophers in remarkable metaphors. The teaching occurs by our *insertion through the name*, through the reality of Jesus present, through the mystery of the cross and the memorial of the cross present in our food, into life and faith and community before the creator God" (*Holy Things*, pp. 152-53, emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Why Study the Past?*, p. 91 (emphasis added).

<sup>22</sup> We noted examples from the Patristic era that illustrate the reception and transmission of the Apostolic witness, and the list could be easily expanded (Papias of Hierapolis, Eusebius of Caesarea, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Epiphanus of Salamis, Augustine, Chrysostom). Theologians from the Reformation and post Reformation era also illustrate the reception of the Christian tradition—the Church Fathers or otherwise, even though Protestant theologians in

If, as we suggest, retrieval is an organic expression of Christian reception and transmission, then looking to Scripture is rightly regarded as the fundamental, archetypal Christian retrieval.<sup>23</sup> Reading Scripture is a form of retrieval. This is true whether the person looking back is a biblical scholar, a pastor, or a Christian businessperson; and it is true whether the reading is done with a view toward technical exegesis, sermon preparation, or personal devotion (or all of the above). Holy Scripture in its canonical whole was written in distant times and places by people whom we will never meet on earth. Thus, to turn to Scripture is to look back. There is no other way that it can be; there is no other way that it needs to be. Just as the scriptures came into existence and have been transmitted within the space-and-time of history, so too our reading of the scriptures occurs within that same realm of space-and-time. Reading Scripture is an exercise in bridging two (or more) horizons—the “home” horizon of the reader, and the “foreign” horizons of the authors and settings of the scriptures.<sup>24</sup> Much of the discussion of biblical hermeneutics in recent years has been devoted to the need for bridging these two horizons and to the means and methods for responsibly doing so.<sup>25</sup> Thus, reading Scripture is a form of retrieval and because of the unique status and authoritative role that Scripture holds in Christianity *this is the fundamental, archetypal Christian retrieval*, one that is defining of Christianity and Christian theology.

Throughout this section we have attempted to anchor theological retrieval to the fundamental Christian impulse to receive and pass along the deposit of faith. Theological retrieval is, as such, an intensification of this basic pattern, an organic expression of Christianity’s posture toward the reception and transmission of the deposit. Thus, although the retrievals we consider in the following section are highly diverse, they hold this in common: they believe the future of the church depends in a profound sense not on our ability to *innovate* (or not *only* to innovate) but in our capacity to creatively and critically retrieve from the church’s past. For theologies of retrieval, immersion in the texts, forms of thought, and forms of life of the Christian past—whether distant or more recent—are believed to open up *fresh opportunities for Christian faithfulness in the present*. Such faithfulness is

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this era are sometimes mistakenly perceived to jettison tradition: Martin Luther (see Manfred Schulze, “Martin Luther and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997/2001], pp. 573-626); John Calvin (see Johannes Van Oort, “John Calvin and the Church Fathers,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997/2001], pp. 661-700); Balthasar Hubmeier (see Andrew K. Lager, “Balthasar Hubmaier’s Use of the Church Fathers: Availability, Access and Interaction,” in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84 [January 2010], pp. 5-66); Jonathan Edwards (see Kyle Strobel, “Jonathan Edwards’s Reformed Doctrine of the Beatific Vision,” in *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland*, ed. Ken Minkema, Adriaan Neale and Kelly van Andel [Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2011], pp. 171–88); and John Wesley (see Richard P. Heitzenrater, “John Wesley’s a Christian Library, Then and Now,” *American Theological Library Association: Proceedings*, vol. 55 [2001], pp. 133-146).

<sup>23</sup> A close reading of the preceding section, on the deposit of faith, will reveal the clearly implicit understanding which is now made explicit.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 177-78.

<sup>25</sup> The recent pursuit of the theological interpretation of Scripture, to which a chapter is devoted in our book *Theology as Retrieval*, is but one instance of this horizon-bridging endeavor.

being pursued in many different areas, more than we can address here.<sup>26</sup> For present purposes we briefly describe six: scripture, theology, worship, spirituality, mission, and reclamation of the cosmos.<sup>27</sup>

### Contemporary Trajectories of Retrieval

Genealogies of modernity abound these days.<sup>28</sup> Depending on how the story of modernity's origins is told, the explanation of what makes tradition a problematic source within the modern mindset of the West varies. This is not the place for rehearsing different configurations to the question of tradition and its place within the modern age, nor does this essay attempt to answer this question. Rather, it is enough to simply note what is widely accepted and fill out our sketch of theological retrieval.

It is widely accepted that chief among Enlightenment ideals are the power of human reason (rationalism) and, of particular significance here, freedom from constraint (emancipationism): emancipation from authority, from transcendence, from prejudgments, and naturally then from tradition.<sup>29</sup> "Modernity is above all things convinced," Michael Allen

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<sup>26</sup> For example, race (e.g., Willie J. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010]; Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulato: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010)), gender (e.g., Norma Verna Harrison, *God's Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], pp. 92-96; Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and [Post]modern* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], chs. 10-14), *theosis* and union with Christ (e.g., Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum," *Modern Theology* 25 [2009]: 647-59; Gösta Hallonsten, "Theosis in Recent Research," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], pp. 281-93), the spiritual senses (e.g., Sarah Coakley and Paul Gavrilyuk, eds., *The Spiritual Senses* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011]), Thomism (e.g. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering, eds., *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010; Reinhard Hütter, "The Ruins of Discontinuity," *First Things* 209 [January 2011]), and the Hebraic heritage of Christianity (e.g., Marvin R. Wilson, *Exploring our Hebraic Heritage: A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014]).

<sup>27</sup> In our treatment of these subjects in *Theology as Retrieval* (see note 3 above) each occupies an entire chapter, and we bring into the conversation a variety of non-theological disciplines as interpretive angles: Charles Taylor's concept of "social imaginary" (scripture), the history of ideas (theology), architecture (worship), the philosophical notion of "cruciform wisdom" (spirituality), Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning (mission), and jazz improvisation (reclamation of the cosmos).

<sup>28</sup> For example, Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013); Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 2012); Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2008); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Michael Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> See Dupré, *The Enlightenment*; Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, CT.; London: Yale University Press, 2003), especially chapter 8, "Memory and the Christian Intellectual Life."

Gillespie writes, “that it owes nothing to the past, that it has made itself, that what matters most is what is happening right now. Indeed, this is the meaning of the freedom, power, and progress that we all prize.”<sup>30</sup> Generally speaking, the attitude of the modern age found the past a hindrance to overcome rather than a resource from which to draw. It is assumed among Enlightenment thinkers, Wilken writes, that “the mark of rationality...is autonomy. Unless a thinker is freed from the constraints of inherited beliefs and institutions, he or she cannot engage in the spirit of free inquiry that leads to truth.” The scholar can only properly carry out their work of “research, scholarship and original thinking” when they free themselves “from the claims of tradition and becomes independent of external constraints (i.e. tradition).”<sup>31</sup> Tradition is problematic if it functions in a way that constrains free thinking, progress, and development toward the future. The modern age is “permanently inured against one thing”, Louis Dupré writes: “the willingness to accept authority uncritically.”<sup>32</sup> History according to modernity’s self-understanding is progress, forever moving forward through the power of “free human willing” toward a future of our own making.<sup>33</sup>

Modernity’s progressive view of history and its confidence in unencumbered rationality closed off a host of resources, but these assumptions rapidly came under fire in the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> And with the priorities of modernity in doubt, a raft of diverse theological retrieval movements arose looking for resources in the church’s past. These included the *nouvelle théologie* initiated by Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, and Maurice Blondel (Catholic), Postliberalism which began through the influence of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck (initially mainline Protestant), the ancient-future movement begun by Robert Webber (Evangelical Protestant), paleo-orthodoxy spearheaded by Thomas Oden (Evangelical Protestant), and the neo-patristic synthesis of Georges Florovsky<sup>35</sup> (Eastern Orthodox). These retrievals comprise something like a wide river delta: though confessionally “wide” they flowed in the same direction, from the past into the present toward the future.<sup>36</sup> The following six retrievals are within that delta, just farther downstream.

*Retrieval for Interpreting Scripture.* In 1860 Benjamin Jowett argued that one should “Read Scripture like any other book”, and this characteristically modern precept is being challenged under a range of retrievals known as theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS). Also, “theological exegesis” or “theological commentary”.<sup>37</sup> Advocates of TIS seek to retrieve a

<sup>30</sup> Gillespie, *Theological Origins*, p. 293.

<sup>31</sup> Wilken, *Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Dupré, *The Enlightenment*, ix.

<sup>33</sup> Gillespie, *Theological Origins*, pp. 281-83. Gillespie argues for inherent, internal conflicts within this view of history that were present from modernity’s start (especially, chapters 1, 8) and came increasingly to the fore during the twentieth century.

<sup>34</sup> See “The Contemporary Scene: Reappropriating Traditions,” in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, third edition, ed. David Ford (London: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 229-286.

<sup>35</sup> See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> We borrow the metaphor from Paul Dehart who applies it to Postliberalism (Paul Dehart, *The Trial of the Witnesses: The Rise and Decline of Postliberal Theology*. [Oxford: Blackwell, 2006]).

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Jowett, “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *The Interpretation of Scripture and Other Essays* (1860; repr., London: George Routledge & Sons, 1907), p. 7.

relationship between theology and the practices of biblical exegesis that transcend or rectify modern developments in biblical studies and theology which, it is believed, hinder the interpretation of the Bible *as Scripture*. This is not to say the discipline of modern biblical studies is dismissed. Instead, many contend that Christian biblical interpretation must utilize the insights of critical studies while, at the same time, remaining wary of its underlying logic and assumptions, many of which they argue are doctrinally insufficient (a model termed “postcritical”<sup>38</sup>). In short, advocates of TIS work to reorder the relationship between the interpreters of Scripture and the theological, doctrinal claims that are fundamental to Christian identity. Several commentary series are devoted to TIS, including the Two Horizons Commentary and the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (the T&T Clark International Theological Commentary is forthcoming). Other series make the resources of ancient interpreters available for contemporary readers, such as the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, the Reformation Commentary on Scripture, and The Church’s Bible. Interest in theological interpretation has also spawned an academic journal, a dictionary, and numerous proposals for its method.<sup>39</sup>

*Retrieval for Theology*. All the retrievals identified in this essay are *theological* in character. Nonetheless, there are a variety of projects which are shaped by retrieval *for theology per se*. While the church must steward all of its resources in relation to the historical dynamics of reception and transmission, of continuity and change, this is of distinctive and particular significance when it relates to the formulation and articulation of Christian belief. In theology in the modern era the emphasis has fallen predominantly on change and the changes proposed have often been significantly shaped by philosophical or cultural criteria without substantive guidance from the theological heritage of the church. The resulting trajectories have both contributed to and been reinforced by the separation of the theological enterprise from the church and Christian life. Theology is a churchly endeavor. No apologies needed. Retrievals for theology seek to overcome both the separation of the church from its theological past and the separation of theology from the church. This is done by constructively employing long-neglected resources of Christian belief. This backwards look may focus on a particular theological doctrine,<sup>40</sup> explore theology more

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<sup>38</sup> The postcritical model grants the validity of critical methods of exegesis but insists on the integrity of specifically theological approaches that regard the Bible as Scripture (Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, “Theological Interpretation/Criticism,” in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, fourth ed. [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2011], pp. 214-217).

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); C. Clifton Black, *Reading Scripture with the Saints* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014); Stephen Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009); Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *Encouraged by the Scriptures: Essays on Scripture, Interpretation, and Life* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011); Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2011). The best overall introduction is Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the distinctive retrieval-shaped explorations of the Trinity by Fred Sanders (*The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010]) and Donald Fairbairn (*Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009]).

broadly,<sup>41</sup> engage a particular theological tradition or school of thought,<sup>42</sup> or draw from the legacy of a specific time period or era. Rightly understood, these resources possess a certain alien relevance, constituting “an irreplaceable means of standing back from our own prevailing assumptions and structures of thought,” not in order to escape one’s own time and place but in order to see it more clearly and engage it more meaningfully.<sup>43</sup>

*Retrieval for Worship.* Corporate worship may be the single richest expression of the beliefs and values of any church. Much of what a church considers most important, most fundamental, will likely find expression in its *worship services*. Consequently, it is noteworthy that this central practice in the life of the church has been the subject of much study, debate and profound change in recent decades. The changes which have rendered many Protestant worship services more “comfortable,” more casual and more production-oriented have been readily visible and are by now quite familiar, and, to some observers, have “often resulted in Sunday morning programs that are focused on the subjective experience of the individual rather than true worship that is mediated by and focused on the blessing of the triune God of grace.”<sup>44</sup> And, in recent years there have also been less visible but no less significant changes within some of the same sectors within Protestantism: the gradual emergence of retrieval-informed corporate worship. Instead of taking cues primarily from contemporary popular culture (though, this context and speaking redemptively in it is always in view)

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<sup>41</sup> Among the most well-known projects along this line are Thomas Oden’s expositions of “paleo-orthodoxy.” See, for example, Oden’s three-volume *Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987-1992), the slightly abridged one-volume *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2009), and *Ancient Christian Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). Also see the thoughtfully creative and pastorally informed theological explorations by Frances Young in *God’s Presence: A Contemporary Recapitulation of Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> For example, see recent retrievals in the Calvinist Reformed tradition (e.g., Oliver Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010] and *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014]; and Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], in the Lutheran tradition (e.g., Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008], and Hans-Martin Barth, *The Theology of Martin Luther: A Critical Assessment*, trans. Linda M. Maloney [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012]); in the Wesleyan tradition (e.g., Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: The Practical Theology of John Wesley* [Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1994], Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley’s Teachings*, 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012-14], Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997], and *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007]). For a recent study which seeks to more robustly reclaim the Jewish dimensions of Christianity, see Marvin R. Wilson, *Exploring our Hebrew Heritage: A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014). Recently published books pursuing retrievals in the Pietist tradition and from the Quaker tradition will be introduced in the Conclusion to this essay.

<sup>43</sup> Quentin Skinner, “A Reply to My Critics,” in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 286. Our terminology of “alien relevance” is drawn from Skinner’s suggestion that it is precisely the “alien character” of ideas from another time and place that “constitutes their ‘relevance’.”

<sup>44</sup> Robbie F. Castleman, *Story-Shaped Worship: Following Patterns from the Bible and History* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), p. 20.



worship is guided and shaped by historical liturgies and liturgical resources from the past. From a church-plant associated with a mega-church<sup>45</sup> to independent churches which have been planted “from scratch,”<sup>46</sup> there is a quiet emergence of corporate worship services which are, for example, more “liturgical,” more contemplative, more formally structured, and often anchored in more frequent celebration of the Lords Supper. Thus, David Fitch observes, “Through the Eucharist, the liturgy, art, music of substance, and the everliving Word, we can be faithful to the apostle’s vision of worship. This is not a new way to worship. Rather this is the reinvigoration of old ways for the challenges that face us in these post-Christian times.”<sup>47</sup>

*Retrieval for Spirituality.* Recent years have seen increased attention to *spirituality* in both society at large and Christianity. The reaction to this is mixed among those who take interest, whether theoretical or applied, in nurturing Christian life. On one hand, observers are encouraged by the fresh interest and energy now being given to spirituality. On the other hand, some have concerns ranging from the reinforcement of unhealthy principles and practices within Christianity to the bypassing of distinctively Christian resources for nurturing spiritual life. While not separated from the church in the same way that was noted above with regard to theology, there is concern that too many recent developments in Christian spirituality lack a robustly ecclesial character and richly Christian forms and substance.<sup>48</sup> Retrievals for spirituality seek to affirm the good and to provide constructive alternatives to unhealthy recent developments. Toward this end, they are seeking “cruciform wisdom,” wisdom which “mainly concerns welcoming and conforming to divine power of the kind found in Jesus.”<sup>49</sup> And in resources from the Christian past they have found both principles and practices which express this wisdom.<sup>50</sup> There is, for example, a reclaiming of respect for the material<sup>51</sup> and the corporate dimensions of spirituality,<sup>52</sup> as well as practices

<sup>45</sup> For example, New Life DOWNTOWN, a church plant from New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO. See <http://www.newlifechurch.org/downtown>.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Bloom Church, Denver, CO. See <http://www.bloomchurchdenver.com/>.

<sup>47</sup> David E. Fitch, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Para-church Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), p. 125.

<sup>48</sup> Susan S. Phillips, “Spiritual Direction as a Navigational Aid in Sanctification,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), pp. 186, and 172; and Fitch, *The Great Giveaway*, pp. 183-88.

<sup>49</sup> Paul K. Moser and Michael T. McFall, “Introduction: Philosophy and Cruciform Wisdom,” in *The Wisdom of the Christian Faith*, ed. Paul K. Moser and Michael T. McFall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> There has been interest in monastic traditions throughout Protestant retrieval for spirituality in recent decades. And, as will be seen in the paragraph below, the monastic heritage is also currently informing refreshed visions of Christian mission. This constructive engagement with resources of monasticism has recently generated two learned and valuable studies: Dennis Okholm, *Dangerous Passions, Deadly Sins: Learning from the Psychology of Ancient Monks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), and Greg Peters, *The Story of Monasticism: Retrieving an Ancient Tradition for Contemporary Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> E.g., Richard J. Foster and Gayle D. Beebe, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 27; Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), pp. 175-82; Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1999), p. 175; Peter E. Gillquist, *The Physical Side of Being*

such as contemplation and other spiritual disciplines.<sup>53</sup> As Bruce Demarest observes, “With the loss of meaning and purpose in society, many are turning inward in search of the spiritual. Interestingly we also are witnessing a turn backward.... The search is on to find those stalwart souls who successfully navigated the storms and deserts of life and to learn their insights and answers.”<sup>54</sup>

*Retrieval for Mission.* Cutting against the grain of popular church-growth strategies and corporate leadership trends, many Christians have called for the retrieval of something old: *monasticism*. “New monastics”, as they are commonly known, are recovering the wisdom and ways of monastic traditions in order to revive the life and mission of the church.<sup>55</sup> New monastics are loosely associated so it is misleading to call them an organized movement, but one can nonetheless discern a common object of retrieval. The “monastic impulse” is the common thread woven through the center of monastic movements despite their historical, geographical, and confessional differences.<sup>56</sup> New monastic retrieval is easily misinterpreted. It is not narrowly doctrinal—seeking a lost or underemphasized belief—nor an effort to merely recover ancient or distinctly monastic practices. Rather, the monastic impulse they seek is a “form of life” or “social imagination” that intimately weds action and belief.<sup>57</sup> The past they seek is one you can *inhabit*. Retrieving the monastic impulse thus involves the

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*Spiritual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), p. 13; and Lane Dennis, “A Call to Holistic Salvation,” in *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, ed. Robert E. Webber and Donald Bloesch (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1978), p. 96.

<sup>52</sup> This increased appreciation for the corporate dimensions of spirituality finds expression in, for example, a variety of “outward” and corporate spiritual disciplines such as submission to other people, confession to other people, service, fellowship, and celebration (e.g., Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* [San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], pp. 141-201), as well as the reclaiming of various forms of spiritual companionship (see Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul*, pp. 187-254). Also consider the observations above on retrieval for corporate worship.

<sup>53</sup> The literature on spiritual disciplines prompted by the recent retrieval for spirituality is large, having likely received as much or more attention than any other dimension of spirituality. Richard Foster and Dallas Willard have written some of the most prominent and influential books on disciplines. See, for example, Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, and, with Emilie Griffin, *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000); also see Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988). For a recent introductory article, see Gordon T. Smith, “Grace and Spiritual Disciplines,” in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), pp. 222-27.

<sup>54</sup> Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul*, p. 256.

<sup>55</sup> Good introductions include Peters, *The Story of Monasticism*; Bernadette Flanagan, *Embracing Solitude: Women and New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), pp. 18-32; Philip Harrold, “The ‘New Monasticism’ as Ancient-Future Belonging” *Theology Today* 67 (2010): 182-93; Ray Simpson, *High Street Monasteries: Fresh Expressions of Committed Christianity* (Stowmarket, Sussex: Kevin Mayhew, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> The term “monastic impulse” was coined by Walter Capps and since adopted by many others (*The Monastic Impulse* [Lexington, KY: Crossroad, 1983]). See Peters, *Story of Monasticism*, v-xxiv; Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), pp. 43-53.

<sup>57</sup> See Kent Eilers, “New Monastic Social Imagination: Theological Retrieval for Ecclesial Renewal”, *American Theological Inquiry*, 6/2 (2013), pp. 45-57; Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 60, 86–88.

creative transposition of another community's form of life. It must be lived, or reenacted, and not merely *comprehended*. The influence of new monasticism is now widespread. Communities can be found across North America and Great Britain,<sup>58</sup> and “new friars” have relocated from economies of privilege to areas of poverty across the globe.<sup>59</sup>

*Reclaiming the Cosmos*. Originating during the 1990s at Cambridge University, Radical Orthodoxy (RO) developed as a broadly ecumenical program to retrieve a lost metaphysical vision for the church's relation to the world. Toward this end the theological mode of retrieval has been fundamental. RO returns to patristic and medieval roots to recover a comprehensive, participatory Christian ontology. According to such a view no created space is secular; nothing is separate and autonomous from its participation in God. The secularisms modernity and postmodernity have fashioned—areas believed to be autonomous and self-standing—can be retaken by articulating and *living from* an encompassing, participatory theology of the cosmos.<sup>60</sup> This perspective, or metaphysic, is what many would call the biblical-patristic Neo-Platonism exemplified in figures like Augustine, Aquinas and more recently by theologians of the *nouvelle théologie*. Like the *nouvelle* theologians, RO's theology does not attempt to be “new” in the innovative or original sense. It is, instead, new in the sense that projects associated with or inspired by RO work to uncover and then reject the assumptions and mediations that modern theology takes for granted. The general direction of RO is captured in the essays collected by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward in *Radical Orthodoxy*.<sup>61</sup> This direction-setting collection was followed by twelve books in a series (Radical Orthodoxy) that addressed topics such as aesthetics, politics, sex, the body, personhood, visibility, and architecture. The work has since been carried forward through the Center of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Nottingham, and three further book series continue its general direction (Veritas, Interventions, and Illuminations).

### Outcomes of Retrieval: A Taxonomy

Theologies of retrieval immerse themselves in the texts, thought forms, and forms of life of the Christian past in order to open up fresh opportunities for Christian faithfulness in the present. That being said, the matter of *how* retrieval contributes toward the goal of Christian faithfulness varies somewhat. While the pattern of looking back in order to move forward is common to theologies of retrieval, the various ways that retrievals are pursued and applied can lead to differing outcomes. In fact, as is the case with any tool, it is possible for this pattern to be employed in ways that result not in retrieval as *properly understood* but rather as

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<sup>58</sup> See <http://schoolforconversion.org/>; <http://www.24-7prayer.co.uk/pages/boiler-rooms/>

<sup>59</sup> See Scott Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Kent Annan, “Chaos and Grace in the Slums of the Earth,” *Christianity Today*, August 29, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Milbank's influence is unmistakable in the articulation of this theological vision. See, John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); idem, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999). These introductions to RO balance coverage and depth: James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004); John Milbank and Simon Oliver, ed., *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009); Steven Shakespeare, *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2007).

something more akin to a caricature of retrieval. The taxonomy below attempts to name the potential outcomes of retrieval. That is, what are the fruits or impacts of retrieval? There are times when the outcomes are intentionally and consciously sought by those undertaking retrieval. At other times retrieval may have unintended—perhaps even unrecognized—consequences. In itself, the matter of intended versus unintended does not render a retrieval either “good” or “bad.” However, we do suggest *attentiveness*, both for those working in the mode of retrieval and those seeking to assess its impact.

### **Retrenchment**

Retrieval is sometimes conducted in such a way that it solidifies accepted beliefs and practices of the present. The Christian past is mined in such a way that it solidifies and confirms current doctrinal formulations, liturgies, or other communal practices. It could also include accepted estimations of particular figures from the Christian tradition and their ongoing value, either positively or negatively. As this application relates to the tensions we have been tracking, it tends to maintain stability rather than advance development and emphasizes continuity more than discontinuity. Whatever resources are being recovered from the past they *confirm* the present rather than decenter it.

There are at least two potential weaknesses associated with these types of outcomes. First, because it tends to confirm accepted beliefs and practices it can easily fail to appreciate the *holy strangeness of the past* and thereby the opportunity to be *constructively decentered* by it. If one turns to the past looking for confirmation, this posture may well color one’s view of the past and casts all that is found there in the shades of the current time and cultural situation. Everyone I find looks just like me, and everything they do is understood according to my presuppositions and beliefs (my social imagination). This posture risks *disembodiment* because the discontinuities between the present and the past are left underemphasized or even unacknowledged. The failure to appropriately weigh discontinuity risks a subtle separation of ourselves from the environments we inhabit. These environments include not merely our national and temporal ones, but our ecclesial ones as well. Second, by stressing stability over change this type can unintentionally sequester itself from the work of the Spirit. This application may confirm our accepted wisdom, but it will also rob us of the opportunity of being shown our idolatries and we may lose the opportunity for reformation.

### **Repristination**

Retrieval, or something akin to it, can be carried out in such a way that it restores the past as such, essentially in its original form. In these instances doctrines, practices, or forms of life are carried forward in their original condition as they are found in the Christian tradition. On one hand, this application may be motivated by great appreciation for the value of the past. And retrieval is, after all, many times driven by the desire to mend the present through pulling forward a feature of the past. However, there are problems with retrievals that lead to these kinds of outcomes.

While reflecting a certain kind of valuing of the past, retrieval can be undertaken in a fashion which unwittingly disrespects the past *as the past*. That is, it fails to engage the past on its own terms. It disembodies the past, acting as if the figures, beliefs, or practices that this application seeks are items that can simply be lifted out of their historical-theological setting and transported to the present outside of their relationship to the supporting environments

in which they once thrived. Repristination “romantically” picks and chooses without appreciation for the complexities of social and theological cultures that once supported the ideas and practices being sought. New monastics could fall within this application if they fail to consider the varied theological imaginations which have supported and sustained the monastic impulse they seek to retrieve.

“Nostalgia” is one way of trying to name the problems here. By this we mean the aspiration to restore *in the same sense* what was lost. The past cannot in a simple sense be restored, as if whatever is being sought in the past could simply be repristinated in the present without change or development. This is, of course, not to say that we should not seek to remain *faithful to* the past, while likewise robustly engaging and living within the present. The challenge of wise retrieval is to grant the past its own integrity—just as we are eager to grant integrity to the present moment—with all of its norms, needs, and necessities. This is, and always has been, the weighty demand of receiving and passing on the deposit of faith.

### Rehabilitation

Having looked back, one can look forward in such a way that one rehabilitates the contemporary relevance of people, beliefs, or practices. Retrieval here corrects what are perceived as contemporary false readings or incorrect interpretations in such a way that a person, idea, or form of life is revived or rescued from perceived misperceptions. In order to commend the ongoing value of these people, ideas, or forms of life, retrieval is applied in such a way that is uncovers their ongoing value and debunks, or at least nuances, developments that led to their loss of influence. Thus, retrieval has the potential to open us to fresh ways of hearing figures from the Christian past, disrupt accepted views by reconsidering ones “from the past,” and point us toward fresh ways of embodying practices that we had written off.

For example, advocates for the theological interpretation of Scripture seeking to rehabilitate spiritual interpretation could fall within this type, and the same would be true of those seeking to relocate Christian accounts of Scripture’s ontology within the doctrine of God. Among advocates of TIS who make these moves, a particular doctrinal conception is rehabilitated by pointing out the historical developments that led to the current conception, and then reasons are pointed out for why we might not want to follow those developments. Radical Orthodoxy illustrates this outcome as well. It seeks to rehabilitate a metaphysic, and it does so by telling a particular story or genealogy of its decline. Their retrieval depends very heavily, in fact, on the persuasiveness of their genealogy. In the realm of corporate worship, the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* can be said to have been, in a sense, rehabilitated both directly and indirectly. Directly, there are churches outside the Anglican communion which have turned to the *BCP* and drawn directly from it, in some cases drawing upon substantial portions of it. Indirectly, there are efforts to reclaim the genre or liturgical spirit of the *BCP*, a notable example being *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*.

Looking back in a way that cultivates rehabilitation has its own risks, and one of these has similarities with the risks associated with retrenchment. Retrenchment often occurs when there is a failure to appreciate distinctives of the people, ideas and practices of the past due to a commitment to confirming the present. Rehabilitation can fail to appreciate distinctives as well, but it can do so on the opposite front—the present. It can

unintentionally downplay the theological, social, and spiritual distinctiveness of those carrying out retrieval, those *receiving from* the past. In other words, it is always important to ask, How are *we* embedded in our present? What makes *us* different from the past? What are the particularities of the present we inhabit? Rehabilitation can be powerful, and it has the potential to unwittingly underplay the embodied distinctives of the present.

Second, rehabilitation also risks distorting the historical particularities of the past. This is the criticism often leveled against RO by historical theologians. Specifically, some argue that RO distorts the past for the sake of its genealogy; that their genealogy tells a story that is not representative of the story's characters and features (Scotus, nominalism, post-Reformation thought, etc.). In the eyes of critics of some retrievals for spirituality, this risk of distortion is realized when, for example, icons are embraced without due understanding of, or appreciation for, the theological and liturgical context which gave rise to, and has historically shaped, their use.

### **Reconciliation**

Retrieval can result in steps toward a greater realization of the unity of the Body of Christ. It can help to reconcile disruptions in Christian catholicity. Applying retrieval in such a way that it explores and fosters reconciliation with “other” Christians can take different though closely related shapes—for example, liturgical or doctrinal—but the basic impact moving forward is the same. By looking back we recover resources that enable us to move closer to unity in the Christian church.

Any of the retrievals considered here could have this kind of ecumenical or catholic impact and many of them do. For example, one might seek to recover the doctrine of the Trinity for the sake of unity on matters of soteriology and the Christian life. Or, like new monastics, forms of life may be retrieved for the sake of creating shared missional ground.

Like other outcomes, looking back and then moving toward reconciliation demands discernment as it faces its own particular risks. For instance, retrieval for reconciliation risks overemphasizing stability and thereby underemphasizing the organic changes within particular Christian traditions that are not in fact corruptions but genuine developments. This requires those involved in retrieval to attend carefully to the reception and transmission of the deposit in order to discern and in turn appreciate genuine development as well as to identify and in turn seek to correct corruptions.

Sometimes when looking back results in looking forward to reconciliation, it leads to relocation or “conversion” from one Christian tradition to another. For example, from within the evangelical church over the last half century, noticeable numbers of people have converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, or Anglicanism at least in part because of retrieval—both the desire for it, the actual pursuit of it, or the embrace of its fruit. Most often this is a journey taken by an individual person or a family. However, as was the case for the formerly evangelical Protestants who entered the Evangelical Orthodox Church and subsequently entered full Orthodox communion, this journey is a corporate one, taken by a church or a group of churches. “Reconciliation” was not necessarily their motive in looking back. In most instances people refer to such interests as a deeper sense of history or greater reverence in worship or a more explicit delineation of authority and guidance for Christian belief and life. But, whatever the original motivation might have been, for some

people retrieval leads not (simply) to the embrace of selected beliefs or practices, but into the corporate fellowship of “another” Christian tradition.

### **Ressourcement**

Retrieval can be done in such a way that one wisely, discerningly looks back and faithfully moves forward. There is no formula to be found, but there is a cadence to be learned. The Christian tradition is engaged in such a way that it resources the church’s life and *receives* the deposit of faith. Retrieval as *ressourcement* negotiates the tensions of retrieval in ways that resonate with the distinctives of one’s own tradition, both the implicit views of history and the doctrinal and social elements which justify the ongoing relevance of the Christian tradition. Regarding continuity and discontinuity, it remains open to be challenged by the past, while also appreciating the continuity of Christian life and faith—the timelessness of the deposit. Regarding constraint and freedom, it is humble enough to work within the deposit of Christian tradition (whether as a lead sheet or an annotated score) while remaining receptive to the Spirit’s agency to initiate fresh performances. Regarding stability and change, it seeks to guard the essence of what has been passed on, while not resisting the while not avoiding the privileged responsibility of testing the tradition (for Protestants, this is testing against Scripture—*norma normans, non normata*).

As with other outcomes, this is not to say that retrieval which results in *ressourcement* looks the same in every case, or that any one Christian tradition has a lock on such retrieval. Rather, retrieval as *ressourcement* engages the Christian past according to the basic pattern of receiving and passing on, and it does so in ways that robustly and genuinely constitute both *reception* (looking back) and *transmission* (looking forward). Any Christian theologian or community who undertakes retrieval in this way can reap its benefits.

### **Conclusion**

Beginning with the acknowledgement that theology always begins already in the middle, we have examined a particular style or mode of theological discernment termed *retrieval*. It is a mode of discernment that is, as illustrated by the selection of projects and sources cited, flourishing at present. Yet, while many theologians are employing retrieval today, we suggest that this mode of discernment is not unique to our time. Retrieval is organic to the Christian tradition. Regardless of the time and place, the joyful work of sanctified reason receives and hands-on. As Mary Potter Engel and Walter E. Wyman rightly observe, “From its inception Christian Theology has had at its core a historical task: to recover and reread the past in order to reconstruct the faith for living in the present.”<sup>62</sup>

The purpose clause in Engel and Wyman’s observation is crucial to a proper understanding and employment of retrieval. While intentionally historical in its looking-back, genuine retrieval never loses sight of the present nor does it fail to look forward. Retrieval requires imagination and creativity. It combines continuity and discontinuity, stability and change, and constraint and freedom. Christian theology entails a challenging but healthy tension between past and present and, as illustrated in the five types of “outcomes” we

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<sup>62</sup> Mary Potter Engel and Walter E. Wyman Jr., introduction to *Revisioning the Past: Prospects in Historical Theology*, ed. Mary Potter Engel and Walter E. Wyman Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), p. 1.

considered above, there are a variety of ways that theologians employ this tension. Discernment requires the theologian to do her work in the present and in her context while being informed by the past. And, when she does her work well, the church of both the present and the future benefit.

A number of books already published in 2015 suggest that there continue to be numbers of theologians who believe that this mode of discernment is worthy of examination and critical appropriation. Roger Olson and Christian Collins Winn illustrate what we referred to as “rehabilitation”. In *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving and Evangelical Tradition*, they “hope to brush off, clean up, and reclaim our Pietist heritage.”<sup>63</sup> Believing that the Pietist tradition has been subject to a combination of neglect and, when it has been attended to, misunderstanding and caricature, Olson and Collins Winn set forth “a sympathetic retrieval of *real* Pietism.”<sup>64</sup> The Quaker tradition is the field of C. Wess Daniels’s retrieval. In *A Convergent Model of Renewal* Daniels argues that “tradition is the only grounds for innovation”<sup>65</sup> but, importantly, the resources of one’s tradition must be creatively reinterpreted for the unique demands of one’s context. This is retrieval as “remix”, simultaneously seeking to receive the Quaker tradition while remixing it *for* the “participatory culture” created by today’s media.<sup>66</sup> Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain offer a distinctly Reformed retrieval. In *Reformed Catholicity* they mine this tradition not for a particular figure or to rehabilitate a lost practice but to recover *catholicity* on Reformed principles. It is not Rome they are after—they never discard their Protestant identity—but the church’s “catholic shape”; a shape not defined by anti-Catholic sentiment but the shared resources of the apostolic tradition.<sup>67</sup> Their Christologically and pneumatologically rich vision of the church proposes a catholic perspective on the reading of Scripture and practice of theology.

The changes and challenges confronting the church and its theologians are both many in number and profound in character. In such times it is tempting to try and flee the present and to live, and do theology, in some other time or place. This would be a terrible mistake. We are both created and called to live in the time and place in which God has placed us—in our “middle.” This divinely crafted circumstance requires discernment, a discernment which can be advanced via retrieval.

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<sup>63</sup> Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), p. x.

<sup>64</sup> Olson and Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism*, p. 17, emphasis original.

<sup>65</sup> C. Wess Daniels, *A Convergent Model of Renewal: Remixing the Quaker Tradition in a Participatory Culture* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Daniels, *Convergent Model*, p. 2 (see also pp. 18, 19).

<sup>67</sup> Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), p. 14.



## FORMING A COMMUNITY OF RESISTANCE: OSCAR ROMERO AND JOERG RIEGER IN CONVERSATION

Nathan Crawford\*

In recent years, I have been involved in a number of conversations with people about the purpose of the church. These have included a wide variety of different people and locations, whether scholars, pastors, lay people, or denominational leaders. In this paper, I tackle the question of the role of the church from the perspective of one who is simultaneously an academic theologian and a minister in the local church. I speak and write from these two places at the same time.

My basic thesis is that the church, when rightly formed, is a community of resistance. I make my argument by drawing on the theoretical work of the Methodist theologian Joerg Rieger. His main concern is to develop a theology that resists oppressive and exclusionary structures by listening to the voice of the margins. Second, I use the theoretical section to analyze the work on the ground of Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador who was martyred in 1980. Romero displays the kind of thoughtful church practice that resists sinful societal structures while also calling people to live out a gospel faith.

Before beginning, though, I want to address two questions that I think immediately present themselves: First, what is the church? and second, what is the church in resistance to? In response to the first question, when I discuss the church, I am describing the institution that those who call themselves Christians believe they belong to. The theological reality of the church crosses all temporal boundaries, while also crossing the lines of race, gender, sexuality, class, socio-economic status, etc. As an ideal institution, the church is that unified group of people who worship the Triune God expressed in Jesus Christ. As a reality, the church is diverse and often in disagreement due to diversity of expression and belief. However, as an institution, the church, at its most basic reality, is the collection of all those people—past, present, and future—who have confessed with their mouth and believed with their heart that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9).

The short answer to the second question, of course, is that the church resists sin. This resistance has, in the last few hundred years in the northern and western hemispheres, been somewhat limited to personal sin. However, Rieger and Romero (and myself) expand the notion of sin to include structural or societal sin.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, the church stands in conflict with those structures that create sinful situations. The church finds any entity creating these things, even in a tangential way, to be committing sin and, thus, to be necessary to be resisted. In what follows, I develop a theological form of resistance that is necessary for the church to fulfill its mission of critiquing and confronting sin.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on an understanding of structural sin, see Nathan Crawford, “The Social Structure of Sin: Han and the Example of Racism,” in *Holy Imagination: Thinking about Social Holiness*, eds. Nathan Crawford, Jonathon Dodrill, and David R. Wilson (Emeth Press, 2015), 127-138.

## Joerg Rieger and a Theology of Resistance

In my more theoretical analysis, I rely on the constructive theological work of Joerg Rieger. His thought focuses on the way that Christianity provides a set of resources for confronting and critiquing the oppressor, especially systems that can broadly be termed “empire,” most present today in the institutions and structures of capitalism.<sup>2</sup> In order to offer a counter to the problems of empire, he utilizes a logic of Christianity “from below,” arguing that the church finds its impetus by embracing those people on the margins of society. He comes to this through a Christology that embraces the nature of Jesus of Nazareth as a “woodworker” struggling to make ends meet in the face of the Roman Empire. For Rieger, Jesus’ ministry embraces those at the margins in order to resist the empire. It is from this understanding of Christology that Rieger ushers his readers into an understanding of theology as resistance, played out in the institution of the church.

Rieger’s development of a theology resistance begins by critiquing theology itself. He argues theology has often been complicit (and sometimes explicit) in the oppression of others. In order to act as a site of resistance, theology must understand how it has caused oppression and exclusion as it has tried to build relationships and understand the other, most notably in forms of colonialism. Rieger says, “Simply trying to alleviate the results of exclusion without facing our own complicity will no longer do. Without awareness of our blind spots and what shapes us unconsciously, we will not be able to overcome the impasse of theological reflection.”<sup>3</sup> Theology begins its resistance when it resists its own moments of oppression and exclusion. From here, theology begins to offer resistance to structures and institutions of oppression and exclusion by embracing nuance, understanding the differences that exist between different people and groups, accepting the otherness as otherness while still offering genuine hospitality.<sup>4</sup> The resistance that Rieger advocates comes through solidarity and identification with those people on the margins of society. He argues that by understanding and identifying with those people—the poor, the working-class, and those on the outside—who have born the burden of the empire, theology can begin to show the cracks and fissures of the structure.<sup>5</sup>

He demonstrates for us the need for a theology that arises out of our life with and for others. Theology begins with a hermeneutics of suspicion, critiquing itself and its traditions as well as the structures of oppression and exclusion in the broader society and our unconscious desires. But, this is not the end for theology. Instead, Rieger shows the need for a hermeneutics of connection. A hermeneutics of connection builds off of the hermeneutics of suspicion by not only showing who are the ones being oppressed and excluded, but also

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<sup>2</sup> For a contemporary work on the nature of empire, see especially Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 183.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 301. Rieger sees this in his work with a group of lower and middle class blue-collar workers in the area of West Dallas. He engages and helps with the fight for workers’ rights, organizing people into groups that resist the attempts of corporations to simply exclude or cut off workers. It is in his relationships with these workers that Rieger can fight with them and for them; it is here that he joins the resistance to the empire.

then actually identifying and building relationship with them. The hermeneutics of connections helps us to relate to all people from all walks of life, of all races, of all sexualities, of all creeds, in all places, etc.<sup>6</sup>

For Rieger, justice is the building of connection through relationship. He says, “Justice in the Judeo-Christian traditions has to do, therefore, with a particular concern for the restoration of relationship with those who are excluded from relationships and pushed to the margins of the covenant...”<sup>7</sup> In the biblical context, justice works by restoring those who have been placed outside the covenant back into relationship with community and God. Christian theology’s understanding of grace—as the completely free act of God to restore relationship with creation—comes from this understanding of justice. God’s justice works through the moments when people are restored to relationship, especially restored in a way that gives them full humanity through full participation in society.

The problem for theology and the church is that we have too long critiqued justice against independent ideas or individual desires; however, the real struggle must be against those “ideas and desires that are produced socially and economically.”<sup>8</sup> We experience this as our society shapes us to perform certain acts without us even having to think about it. This is true even for theology, which has had itself used at different times to reinforce the nature and structure of empire. Rieger finds this to be true especially of modern versions of classical theism. In so doing, it tends to reinforce the idea of a “king” or “head” that has ultimate authority—usually given by God—and reflects the earthly version of this God.<sup>9</sup> The empire comes to make theology reflect its values instead of theology offering critique of empire.

Oftentimes the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon are invoked as the beginning point, used to reinforcement this classical theism. Rieger argues that these councils actually work against the reification of God that occurs in classical theism by promoting open-endedness, working against the understanding of empire supported in classical theism. He notices that neither council “gives a precise definition of the coequality of God and Christ, and of Christ and humanity, that would resolve paradox and tension.”<sup>10</sup> There is openness in the creeds at the very point where we would expect them to close. When viewed through the lens of the life and ministry of Jesus, i.e., read from the bottom-up, the Nicene and Chalcedon Creeds are changed, where God now is revealed in the One born in the manger, who commiserates with sinners and prostitutes, and dies on the cross; this is not the all-powerful, all-mighty God that reinforces the powerful but the God revealed in the powerless.<sup>11</sup> If we read the Nicene Creed “in terms of the life and ministry of Jesus reconstructing notions such as omnipotence, impassibility and immutability, [then] affirming the divinity of Jesus ultimately implies a deconstruction of the use of classical theist attributes for God and a radical

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<sup>6</sup> Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 104.

<sup>7</sup> Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 137.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>9</sup> Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 100.

<sup>11</sup> Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 20-21.

reconstruction of the divine.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, when we read the creeds from the bottom-up we find a different understanding of God, which leads us to a different set of practices, especially in relation to empire.

In order to do theology from below, we do two things. First, we acknowledge the otherness of God, understanding the fact that we cannot control God. God’s otherness undoes all traditions and structures. Second, through our understanding of God’s radical otherness, we encounter God’s otherness in new ways. Now the otherness does not have to be in the forms of top-down power, but can also come from the One who gave up being God to become human, a servant of all humankind. From here we can begin to do theology in light of the God of Jesus Christ, the God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. In this space we are invited “to embrace the view ‘from below’ in radical ways at the points where Godself joins in the suffering of those who are under unbearable pressure.” This comes from the work and life of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

The bottom-up logic that Rieger utilizes comes from the creedal affirmations of Jesus, along with the biblical accounts of his life. In both of these, the challenge of Jesus is to do theology from below, from the margins. Utilizing the logic of Matthew 20:16, Rieger says Jesus was a servant who worked with the least of these, not simply accepting the world as it is, but using his servanthood to directly challenge those doing theology from above.<sup>14</sup> The servanthood of Christ leads to his suffering on the cross. The suffering of Christ also leads us to see how it can help us resist and overcome the systems of oppression and exclusion. We must remember that the violent death of Jesus as a criminal of the Roman Empire was not the end, but the beginning of something new.<sup>15</sup> Nothing less than a conversion is called for; we need a conversion of the relationship between the self and other, drawn through a hermeneutics of connection that respects difference while embracing a servanthood that helps us understand and embrace the other.<sup>16</sup>

The bottom-up logic that Rieger utilizes is made most explicit in his Christology. He begins his understanding of Christ as the servant. The incarnation is a movement of God working from below, the bottom-up. He points to the fact that God takes on the humanity of a poor construction worker in a family of day laborers, a group located “on the underside of a small part of the powerful economy of the Roman Empire.”<sup>17</sup> Theology cannot overlook the particular place where Jesus Christ takes on the flesh of humanity. Jesus does this with a particular human body, becoming the “son of a construction worker and an unwed mother at the margins of the Jewish world,” which was on the margins of the larger Roman Empire. Jesus exhibits for the church the action of not only identifying with the margins, but taking up residence there.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Joerg Rieger et al., *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 152.

<sup>13</sup> Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 195.

<sup>14</sup> Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Rieger et al., *Beyond the Spirit of Empire*, 151.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

<sup>17</sup> Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 31-32.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

Early Christian thinking about the person of Jesus begins from the margins. In so doing, theology offers a direct challenge to the emperor cult of the Roman Empire, a top-down approach that structured all aspects of a person and community's life.<sup>19</sup> Christology resists Roman imperial thought by embracing a logic of God manifested in the "least of these" and on the margins, incarnated in a stable and killed on a cross.<sup>20</sup> Christian theologians' focus on the person of Jesus allows it to open the possibility of a God who takes on the form of the slave to liberate all people.

As the early Christian movement grows and becomes part of the empire, there is an attempt on the part of imperial thinkers to domesticate Christ. Rieger believes these theologians would do so by making Christ "part of the system to such a degree that little or no room exists for the pursuit of alternative realities of Christ."<sup>21</sup> The empire wants to use titles usually reserved for Caesar for Christ, like "savior" and "lord." The empire tries to use these to domesticate Jesus, making him the all-powerful king/Caesar of the empire. However, for early Christian thinkers, the association of these titles with Jesus creates a fundamental ambivalence that results in a destabilization of their commonly accepted meaning.<sup>22</sup> When we say "Jesus is Lord" or that "Jesus is Savior," we are acknowledging that the one who had no earthly power was the ultimate; we are saying that the least are first and that the first are least. As Rieger says, "Christ as Lord models a kind of power that is diametrically opposed to the power of the empire."<sup>23</sup> Jesus directly challenges all who claim power as emperor, claiming the place of "Lord" that no other emperor or political figure can.<sup>24</sup> He is the Lord that challenges all attempts at lordship that oppresses and/ or dehumanizes people. As Rieger says, "Jesus as Lord overcomes all other lords that build their empires on the back of the people."<sup>25</sup>

The otherness of God continues to open up the possibilities of God. For Rieger, the cosmic nature of Christ never fits into the Empire. Alluding to 1 Cor. 1:23, he mentions that Christ is always a "stumbling block" to the empire because Christ never fits into its domesticating structures.<sup>26</sup> The cosmic nature of Christ calls the church to a different kind of activism, one where the goal is not to be in control, but finds meaning in the wounded Christ through the work of suffering and resistance. This cosmic Christ is grounded in the biblical narrative, the tradition, and in solidarity with those people being oppressed and excluded.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the subjectivity and agency that Christ assumes is one defined by

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<sup>19</sup> Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 27.

<sup>20</sup> Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 70. Rieger's reading of the Gospel texts focuses on the idea that the authors of the Gospels are from the working class and this colors the way that they write about Jesus; as well, they use economic parables that suggest an equaling of people so that the poor and oppressed are protected while also seeing God working first from the place of margins. See especially Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 109-112.

<sup>21</sup> Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

“solidarity with outcasts” instead of through the claiming of top-down power. It is this same subjectivity and agency of connection that Christ calls us to embody as well.<sup>28</sup>

For Rieger, the activity of the church takes on the praxis of Jesus Christ. Praxis is always God’s own praxis as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> For the Christian church resistance to the powers of empire is not simply for the sake of resistance; rather, resistance moves us into the deeper truth revealed in and through Christ, a truth that is in contrast to that offered by empire. Resistance is resistance to whatever limits the reality of Christ and whatever may keep the church from following Christ.<sup>30</sup> Resistance is a spiritual discipline that helps us to grow closer to Christ through the loving of our neighbors on the margins of society. Resistance helps us to perform the hermeneutics of connection so that the gospel may be fulfilled.

### **Oscar Romero and a Ministry of Resistance**

Building upon the theology of resistance developed in the work of Joerg Rieger, I turn to a more specifically practical theology in the life and thought of Oscar Romero. Romero’s sermons and pastoral letters offer us an interesting insight into the way in which a pastor can lead his or her church in resisting the oppression that afflicts those on the margins and outside of society.

I would argue that Romero’s ministry is one of direct resistance to El Salvadoran oppressors. He founds and builds a community “from below,” working with the poor and oppressed to construct a Christian community that is in active, peaceful resistance to the oppression caused by the government, and, at times, his own church. As archbishop of a Central (and Latin) American country, Romero is a political person who carries some significant clout. However, he places himself firmly with the lower classes (*campesinos*). In doing so, Romero acts as mediator, speaking to the lower classes about what the rich say and are doing and how the elite are being oppressors; but he also speaks to the socio-economically elite about the plight of the poor and oppressed. This is not a dialogue looking for common ground, but a critique by Romero of the rich, refusing to capitulate to their demands, saying that justice must be done to the *campesinos*. Romero’s entire vision for the work of the church is to bring justice to those who have been excluded, oppressed, and disenfranchised.

Romero’s time as priest and bishop was spent in a more conservative position. He did not advocate the direct resistance of the socio-economic upper classes that he does as archbishop. He spends much time looking for common ground so all people come to embrace the salvation offered by the Gospel. This is not to say that he was unaware of or did not fight for the poor and oppressed, just that he did not do so in direct resistance to the upper classes. Romero’s viewpoint changes due to the continued violence done by the right-wing militias and police groups, who serve the upper classes and socio-economic elite. Specifically, they assassinate Romero’s friend Rutilio Grande, along with a man and boy riding with him. The death of his friend, a priest, at the hands of the militias fighting for the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>29</sup> Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 318.

government changes Romero.<sup>31</sup> He experiences, in a term I adopt from him, “conversion”, moving him into direct resistance to the powers that be.

For Romero, conversion is the central “word” at the heart of Christianity. He believes the church must always call people to conversion so that “God is adored by all, Christ acknowledged as only Savior, deep joy of spirit in being at peace with God and with our brothers and sisters.”<sup>32</sup> So, if society becomes able to feed and clothe and give justice to everyone, the church must still call the world to be converted to God in and through Christ. This conversion is to acknowledge God, the giver of all. Since we have not become such a utopian society, the call to conversion is of much greater consequence. The conversion that Christianity asks for is to criticize our false way of looking at the world. Instead, believers must see the world as God does, with love and the need for justice to be done.

The church calls people to conversion through its denunciation of sin as Christ does.<sup>33</sup> The idea is that the church must do something to convert the world by overcoming sin through the power of Christ. Romero argues that the church can easily do nothing, but that this is the “sin of omission,” which is just as harmful as deliberate sin.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the church must act, and act in the way that Christ did. Drawing from Vatican II, Romero talks of conversion as fixing our gaze on those who do not have the means to achieve a way of life that is worthy of giving dignity to human beings, who have been oppressed by the empire.<sup>35</sup> Thus, true conversion is to do justice and peace. This is the “true objective of Christians.”<sup>36</sup> The church performs works of charity for the welfare and education of all, especially the poor, in order to make justice and peace a reality. In this way, the work of the church echoes the work of Christ.

Romero’s ministry begins by calling the country of El Salvador to conversion. He looks to the government to be accountable to its people, to promote democracy and to stop killing and “disappearing” people. In this call, he actively resists the powerful because he says that the government must now adopt a position that is with the *campesinos*. In his Second Pastoral Letter, Romero even goes so far as to say, “To the president’s offer of dialogue, therefore, the church repeats its readiness, so long as dialogue uses a common language, and not a vocabulary that runs down and defames the church, and provided that events restore to the church the confidence it has lost in the government.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, we find in Romero an archbishop who calls his country to conversion so that peace and justice happens, but does so by actively resisting the structures the government attempts to impose upon him.

In regards to the non-governmental, secular organizations operating in El Salvador at this time, Romero also extends the offer of dialogue and help. He says that the church stands in solidarity with any group or person seeking justice, saying, “[I]f the aim of the struggle is just,

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<sup>31</sup> See James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989), 9ff.

<sup>32</sup> Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love*, trans. and ed., James R. Brockman (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*, trans. Michael J. Walsh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), 74.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

the church will support it with all the power of the gospel. In the same way it will denounce, with bold impartiality, all injustice in any organization, wherever it is found.”<sup>38</sup> The church will work with anyone who pursues justice and will speak out with any pointing out injustice. All people can help attain the common good and, for a country to truly be converted, all people must contribute to the good of all other people. This is the only way to attain true, righteous peace.<sup>39</sup> Romero calls for further conversion. He says that while the work of secular organizations can help attain the common good, only the love of neighbor can truly result in justice, where “there would be no terrorism, no repression, no selfishness, none of such cruel inequalities in society, no abductions, no crimes.”<sup>40</sup> The love of neighbor that comes through the Christian love of God truly brings justice and peace in a way that can last through eternity.

In order to call society to the love of neighbor, the church must also go through a conversion. No longer can it simply be content to preach an otherworldly salvation. For Romero, the church “is the body of Christ in history.”<sup>41</sup> The church can be the body of Christ because God is already in the midst of us, manifest in the world through the creation and incarnation, so that the church can now join God in what God is doing, in the present, the here and now.<sup>42</sup> The church brings the Easter event to the world as it is born out of Easter and “exists to be a sign and instrument of Easter in the world.”<sup>43</sup> Being part of the Easter church means that one is faithful to the work of Christ in the world, moving from death to life, advocating life and love over death and oppression. This is what it means for the church to be faithful to the Lord through conversion.<sup>44</sup>

The work of bringing life over death belongs, partly, to the church. The church does so by signifying and bringing into being the “liberating love of God, manifested in Christ,” through the “preferential option for the poor,” as first articulated at Medellin. The preferential option is embraced as the work of the church because it is here that Christ’s transforming and liberative work is made most manifest; Christ reveals Godself in the margins, in and among the poor, the *campesinos*.<sup>45</sup> By taking up this liberative work the church becomes the “voice of the voiceless.” Due to its love for God and fidelity to the gospel, the church must have a strong presence in and with the poor, the marginal, the oppressed and all “legitimate” struggles working for a more just society.<sup>46</sup> The church calls all people to join in this struggle, working to rouse all individuals to become “a community of persons where all cooperate for the common good.”<sup>47</sup>

One of the most useful ways for the church to motivate people is through the denunciation of sinful social structures. The church, by being with the marginalized and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>39</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 27.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>41</sup> Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>47</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 29.



oppressed, hears their cry and must act, denouncing the structures and institutions that have led to such a situation.<sup>48</sup> The church communicates this cry to others who are unaware and/or ignorant. Romero believes it is the pastoral responsibility of both the church and himself to denounce the sin bringing about oppression while also giving an urgent appeal to people to join in the work of ending exclusion and marginalization. He also gives an urgent call to those who have benefitted the most from oppression, the socio-economic elite who have maintained their status through the work and sweat of the *campesinos*. Romero believes that by making the rich aware of such atrocities they will be able to make a difference since it is in their hands that “the most effective means of remedying the situation” reside.<sup>49</sup>

Romero does not allow the rich off the hook, though. He uses his place as archbishop to point out the places that he believes our world creates idols by making the created into the absolute, taking the place of God.<sup>50</sup> First, Romero says that our world absolutizes wealth and private property to the point that many would rather have these than see the poor fed or the oppressed set free. Second, he believes that we absolutize national security, making the “protection” of one’s country all-important, even to the point of killing others or even, as in Romero’s country, its own citizens. Third, he says that we absolutize organizations, meaning that people most identify with the union or political party to which they belong over and against the church.<sup>51</sup> In marking these as idols Romero is directly challenging what the rich, elite, and powerful of his world hold dear. He hopes to cause a moment of crisis, saying, “A church that doesn’t provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn’t unsettle, a word of God that doesn’t get under anyone’s skin, a word of God that doesn’t touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed—what gospel is that?”<sup>52</sup> The gospel Romero evokes is that which calls into question the very society that he speaks it into.

While it could be read as such, his denunciation of sin is not a call to physical violence. Romero says that the church recognizes the institutional violence that exists in society (especially the El Salvador of Romero’s time) and the church must take up its prophetic task and speak against this. However, the church does not embrace violent uprising. The church calls people to the violence of conversion, the violence that comes through love that overthrows oppression, that overcomes one’s own inclination to dominate, instead turning to the activity of service, becoming servants like Christ.<sup>53</sup> Romero says, “The church believes in only one violence, that of Christ, who was nailed to the cross...taking upon himself all the violence of hatred and misunderstanding, so that we humans might forgive one another, love one another, feel ourselves brothers and sisters.”<sup>54</sup> The violence done to Christ ends all violence, as well as all need for violence. Instead, the church pursues peace.

The pursuit of peace becomes the ultimate act of resistance as it undercuts the primary means for the oppressor to enforce his will: physical violence. Peace says that physical violence is no longer necessary because there is no longer any need to fight over resources or

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<sup>48</sup> Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 74.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-136.

<sup>52</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 44.

<sup>53</sup> Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 77.

<sup>54</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 10.

power. This results from real peace that overcomes institutional violence, the structural and social injustices that excludes citizens from having a voice in the affairs of the country, the violence resulting in repression. This is the first cause of violence and must be resisted and overcome in order for peace to be enacted.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the more that justice occurs, the more there will be peace. Peace comes from justice and justice brings more peace.<sup>56</sup> Justice works against the institutional violence that results in death. Instead, justice brings equality and understanding through the fair distribution of resources and goods, ultimately restoring broken relationships. This is why justice cannot be bought, it does not occur by simply “throwing money” at a problem. Justice happens when people work together to overcome differences by being in solidarity with one another.<sup>57</sup> This brings peace, which is the goal of the church.

### Conclusion

Let me conclude by making explicit some of the commonalities between Rieger and Romero and then pointing to some more practical steps the church today can take to embody the resistance both find necessary. The first point of commonality between the two is that they are interested in a bottom-up approach to theology and doing ministry. Both Rieger and Romero spend their time with the masses, especially those that are on the outskirts of society. Second, they use this experience with the lowly to speak to the powerful. Both refuse to allow the socio-economically elite to simply gloss over or ignore the oppression, exclusion, and marginalization existing in our world. Instead, both speak for the lowly to the rich, critiquing the elite for participating in and perpetuating structures that keep people lowly. In this way, Rieger and Romero offer a way of resisting the powerful through resistance.

The third commonality that they share is their actual work with outsider groups. Whether it is Rieger working with the workers of West Texas or Romero with the *campesinos*, both have intentionally worked with marginalized and/ or forgotten people. They are working at the level of the people, doing ministry from the bottom-up. They demonstrate for the church a way of doing ministry that moves from the people to the leaders and not the other way around. Similarly, they show that when ministry is done in a bottom-up approach, it builds relationships with people and communities in such a way that the first move is to help them instead of the powerful—in this way, their ministries are resistant. Their resistance lies in the fact that they seek to serve the people first and to spend their time with the “least of these.”

What might this look like today? Let me use my current context as an example. My church is involved in a project that is targeting one poor neighborhood/ trailer park in our town. This is a neighborhood that has been neglected and intentionally set aside, with a number of Latinos living there. We are spending time fixing the house of a man who cannot do it himself, building a relationship with this man and his neighbors. We are also putting a community park into this neighborhood so that people have a place to go and gather. As the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>56</sup> Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Romero, *Violence of Love*, 130.

summer continues, we will spend time cleaning and being at the park so that we can build relationships with the people, especially the children.

Similarly, our town has a major problem with methamphetamine. We are now targeting meth addicts and meth houses in order to directly confront the problem. As well, we are engaging young people in the process of mentoring, tutoring, and volunteerism in order to invest in them. In so doing, we are hoping that we are being preventive in regards to the meth epidemic in our town, instead of simply being reactionary. As well, we run a series of support groups that help young people and adults deal with the problems that lead them to engaging in unsafe behavior. It is a time of support for these people so that they are able to have a safe place that encourages them, yet challenges them to construct a different future for themselves.

These programs are outside the purview of our town government and leaders. It is not a direct assault on them, as Romero's sermons and pastoral letters were. Rather, it is an attempt to fix a problem that causes us to get our hands dirty, hopefully emulating the ministry of Jesus. As well, we are going against the grain of the culture of our town, which basically ignores Latinos and pretends like we do not have drug problems. We are confronting these issues "head-on" and are doing so against the tenor of our town. This is not to say that we are a perfect model, just that we are trying to live out a gospel that is in resistance to the empire, directly confronting some of the structural sin that we encounter in our world.



## C. S. LEWIS: THE “REAL TUSSLE” OF FORGIVENESS

Sr. Sheila Galligan, IHM\*

By any standards C. S. Lewis was a remarkable man. Self-designated as the “most dejected and reluctant convert in all England”<sup>1</sup> and described by a friend as “the most converted man I ever met”<sup>2</sup> the twentieth century has produced few writers whose works resonate with such compelling intensity; few, too, whose unflinching quest for truth was matched with an ability to proclaim it with such persuasiveness. Within that context I believe that Lewis’ life and literary legacy invite us to probe more deeply into the fact that he was a “remarkable man” precisely because of the fact that he encountered God’s remarkable gift of mercy! In light of that he came to personally know (experientially) forgiveness as the name of love in a wounded world and offer counsel for exercising this virtue in daily life. He exemplifies this in a letter to his friend Malcolm, as he reflects on the challenge of “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” in The Lord’s Prayer. He admits that “to go on forgiving, to forgive the same offence every time” is “the real tussle.”<sup>3</sup> Lewis provides a compelling picture of the geography of the heart in its state of unforgiveness and the need to muster the graced strength to plunge into the hard work of the tussle! He helps us understand how our resistance to forgive ( fueled by rumination and the “rats of resentment”) can be transformed in light of embodying Christ’s disconcerting challenge to “love” one’s enemy. In this reflection I hope to present Lewis as a richly significant mentor of forgiveness.

### Forgiven and Forgiving

As his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* so aptly notes, Lewis understood his coming to know and love Christ as an unexpected gift. Though he was keenly aware of an indefinable void in his life, it was no easy task for God to elicit a faith-filled assent from the recalcitrant Lewis. Forthrightly admitting this, he wrote: “The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore *that Love* which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape?” (SJ 182-183, italics mine). He slowly came to acknowledge his own conversion within the context of a personal encounter with “that Love”—the God who is rightly characterized as “rich in mercy”(Eph 2:4). Thus Lewis at a later point in his life rejoiced: “The important thing is that a discord has been resolved, and it is certainly the great Resolver who has done it.” (LM 107) Sin, as Lewis often points out, ultimately comes down to an arrogant rejection of God’s love—a love that is specifically manifested in the mode of mercy. Once one admits that the heart of sinfulness is embodied in that rejection, whether it takes the form of a soft sensuality, greed, or the ruthless exploitation of our neighbor, the “great Resolver” is ready to step in with the medicine of merciful forgiveness. Then God’s “just, generous, scalding indignation passes... into embracing, exultant, re-welcoming love.

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (Glasgow: Collins, Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 182; hereafter this text will be referred to within the text by the abbreviation SJ.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan : W.B. Eerdmans, 1970), 12.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanich, 1964), 27; hereafter this text will be referred to within the text by the abbreviation LM .

This is how friends and lovers are truly reconciled. Hot wrath; hot love. Such anger is the fluid that love bleeds when you cut it..." (LM, 97) This understanding animated Lewis' appreciation for the marvelous mystery of mercy.

And of course the exercise of mercy is ever God's work! The heart of the matter is embedded in the very word itself: for-*give*-ness! Mercy is God's gracious gift. And it's a gift precisely because the sinner, the one who hurt you, doesn't deserve it. Thus John Paul II (often described as the Pope of Mercy) consistently, persistently proclaimed that "conversion to God always consists in discovering his mercy."<sup>4</sup> Without doubt the fullness and depth of this truth has been revealed in Christ. His death, the shedding of his blood, was the supreme (concrete and tangible!) expression of God's merciful love for humanity. Lewis highlights this truth through an engaging fictional conversation in *The Great Divorce*. The conversation (on the outskirts of heaven) is between a former factory foreman and one of his workers (now in heaven!) who had committed murder during his life on earth. The malicious foreman reacts to the possibility of receiving forgiveness for his own sins with the arrogant retort: "I'm not asking for anybody's bleeding charity." The former worker, having experienced the mercy of God, patiently replies: "Then do. Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought."<sup>5</sup> Certainly, "Bleeding Charity" is a richly significant, evocative image, for God's merciful love is visibly enfleshed in the outpouring of Jesus' very life: his precious blood (cf. Col 1:19ff). Indeed, this sacrificial love pierces the prism of human experience as "bleeding charity." Our guilt, our sin "is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ."<sup>6</sup> Lewis reiterates this root truth in the novel *Perelandra*. The king expresses his appreciation for the gift of mercy when he says: "I know now what they say about justice. And perhaps they may well, for in that world things always fall before justice. But Maleldil always goes above it. All is gift."<sup>7</sup>

And there is more! Once one humbly receives the medicine of mercy and the "I am sorry" is expressed, the matter is ended! No recriminations, no post-mortems. Forgiveness alters the past, makes the past into past perfect! Guilt and shame must no longer haunt the present. Lewis provides a specific example in *The Silver Chair*. Jill wants to tell Aslan how sorry she is for her sinful actions but she cannot find words (a challenge for most of us, yes?) to fully express her contrition. Drawing her close, Aslan tenderly says: "Think of that no more. I will not always be scolding"<sup>8</sup> In a carefully crafted scene in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Lewis considers the plight of Edmund, who had at last admitted his treachery. He approaches Aslan acknowledging that "inexcusable bit, the sin." The children saw Aslan and Edmund walking together. Then Aslan comes to meet them, bringing Edmund with him: "Here is your brother," Aslan says, "and there is no need to talk to him about what is past."<sup>9</sup> As a result of this unmerited gift of mercy Edmund is spiritually healed.

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (Boston, Ma.: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980), #6.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (Glasgow: Collins, Fount paperbacks, 1977), 32.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 61.

<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 209.

<sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London: Collins, Fontana Lions, 1980), 201.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1960),

## Forgiveness The Christian Journey

No surprise to find that in explaining the nature of forgiveness Lewis appeals to Jesus, in whom we see the “divine life operating under human conditions.”<sup>10</sup> Thus the norm or Christian forgiveness is the Father’s own forgiveness. It’s all there—in one densely compact imperative: “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). As God’s beloved children we are called to receive and gift others with mercy. Receiving God’s mercy is twinned with the corresponding obligation to forgive (cf. Mt 5:23-24; Lk 7: 41-42, Mt 18: 23-25). Realizing the challenging implications of Jesus’ blunt insistence on forgiveness Lewis sagely observed: “. . . I am telling you what Christianity is. I did not invent it. And there, right in the middle of it, I find “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those that sin against us.” There is not slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness on any other terms.”<sup>11</sup> In one of the last chapters of *Letters to Malcolm* (and shortly before his death) Lewis refers to his own life. He rejoices in the fact that he had at last forgiven someone whom he had been trying to forgive for over thirty years! At that time he discovered that forgiving and being forgiven were one: “It also seemed to me that forgiving (that man’s cruelty) and being forgiven (my resentment) were the very same things” (LM, 106-107 In a more humorous, bare-bones description in *God in the Dock* he faced the matter head-on: “If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don’t recommend Christianity” Contrary to all natural instincts Jesus intensifies the sense of responsibility of the offended brother/sister who must (with God’s grace) desist from contempt and offer compassion. It is God’s very love that makes him exact so much from us.

God is “rich in mercy.”(Eph 2:4): that’s the bedrock conviction of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, Lewis realizes how difficult it can be to believe in and accept the reality of this kind of love or more to the point, this remarkable Lover. Our minds and hearts falter: “To believe in the forgiveness of sins is not nearly so easy as I thought. Real belief in it is the sort of thing that very easily slips away if we don’t keep polishing it up.” (LM 97) No irrelevant rhetoric here!

Ever practical Lewis recognized the hard work (the tussle!) of forgiveness. Not content with broad generalities he is bluntly realistic: “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive and then, to mention the subject at all is to be greeted with howls of anger.” (MC 104) Thus the enterprise of embodying the virtue is linked with the nitty-gritty of the “something to forgive” situations. What we must courageously confront, Lewis maintains, is the stumbling block of the “little things” that we find so difficult to forgive: “It is perhaps not so hard to forgive a great injury. But to forgive the incessant provocations of daily life—to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son—how can we do it?”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the succession of explosive little situations become veritable minefields in the effort to grant the gift of forgiveness. We are all too aware of the jumble of emotions—the mix of feeling sad and mad (perhaps a new word which blends sad and mad: “smadness” would be apt?) that tends to escalate.

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<sup>10</sup> C. S. Lewis *The Four Loves* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanich, 1960), 17.

<sup>11</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan 1980), 104.

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Lewis “On Forgiveness” in *Fern-Seed and Elephants* (Fontana, 1975), 43.

## Practical Matters: Rumination and Resentment

Lewis perceptively pinpoints the two obstacles which fuel the state of unforgiveness: rumination and resentment.<sup>13</sup> Rumination—repeatedly reflecting on who has hurt us, how they hurt us, what they did—involves our thoughts. He underscores the fact that we mull over the hurt, bringing it back to mind for further working over. Quite truthfully we often relish recalling the pain and must overcome a “tendency to chew over and over the cud of some injury”<sup>14</sup> He speaks of the mind doing a diabolical “shuttle service” to and fro, of how easily it “dwells on everything that can aggravate the offense.”<sup>15</sup> Something in us does not wish them well! The nasty thoughts rattle around; the memory fuels the fire of “smadness” again. We replay (relish the recall?) the event—providing unending reruns of the past rendezvous with pain. I think Lewis would find the contemporary poem “Chewing” more than apt:

Chewing  
I chew  
I chew about this.  
I chew about that.  
I chew about them.  
All that chewing, I’m still not satisfied.  
I’m still not full.  
I chew some more.  
I chew about what they do.  
I chew about what they don’t do.  
I masticate.  
In the end I discover  
I have eaten away the best part of my life.<sup>16</sup>

Hostile thoughts constitute an army of malevolent imps—which conspire to prolong animosity.

Once again Lewis provides a singularly striking example in *The Great Divorce*. The heavenly spirit ( the factory worker who apparently committed murder while on earth) is speaking with the self-righteous foreman ghost. He humbly states the unpalatable truth: “Murdering old Jack wasn’t the worst thing I did. That was the work of a moment and I was half mad when I did it. But I murdered you in my heart, deliberately, for years. I used to lie awake at night thinking what I’d do to you if ever I got the chance. That is why I have been sent to you now: to ask your forgiveness...” (GD, 33) Absorbed in thinking about his own rights and soured by consequent feelings resentment the foreman adamantly refuses to forgive.

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<sup>13</sup> Originally, the word referred to the way cows and certain other animals eat, storing partially digested food in a stomach called a rumen, bringing that food up later to chew over more thoroughly.

<sup>14</sup> C. S. Lewis *Reflections on the Psalms*, (Glasgow: Collins, Fount Paperbacks, 1977), 26; hereafter this text will be referred to within the text by the abbreviation P.

<sup>15</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids, Mich., W.B. Eerdmans, 1967), 93.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Fleming ([http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=10195](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=10195)).



Rumination often leads to a veiled feeling of contempt. “I just can’t stop thinking about it,” we tearfully sob, and the memory of “it” absorbs and drains our energy. Let’s be honest! The meaning of “it” needs no further explanation. Lewis underscores the need to grapple seriously with the sustained smugness, the nasty thoughts which make it so difficult (a tussle!) to forgive.

By some dark alchemy rumination then lights the tenders of resentment (remember the etymological Latin root: re-sentire: to feel again) and unless some antidote is found, resentment breeds on-going enmity and hatred. “I can’t stop thinking about it” morphs into the “and I hate her/him.” The “jingle channel” (as psychologist Martin Seligman calls it)—that steady hum of phrases and images running constantly below the level of consciousness—holds us hostage in a state of unforgiveness. Lewis’ self-understanding is pertinent. He comes to his evening prayer and remembers that he has “sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed” throughout the day. Apparently the rats of resentment and vindictiveness are always there in the cellar of my soul. “MC Acclaimed forgiveness researcher Everett Worthington’s understanding is similar: “Unforgiveness is slow-cooked through vengeful rumination into resentment, hatred, hostility, anger, fear stress and bitterness. it is cacophony”<sup>17</sup> The repetitive negative spiral of rumination and resentment keeps our hearts constrained and resistant to God’s grace.

In an arresting expansion Lewis acknowledges what we so often experience. The pertinent passage is remarkably incisive and merits quoting at some length “There is no use talking as if forgiveness were easy... For we find that the work of forgiveness has to be done over and over and over again. We forgive, we mortify our resentment; a week later some chain of thought carries us back to the original offence and we discover the old resentment blazing away as if nothing had been done about it at all. We need to forgive our brother seventy times seven not only for the 490 offences but for one offence...” (P 26-27) He presses the theme still further: “In other words, something inside us, the feeling of resentment, the feeling that wants to get one’s own back, must be simply killed. I do not mean that anyone can decide this moment that he will never feel it any more. That is not how things happen. I mean that every time it bobs its head up, day after day, year after year, all our lives long, we must hit it on the head. It is hard work, but the attempt is not impossible.” (MC 107)<sup>18</sup>

The advice to “hit it on the head” may be patently accurate—but the key question is “How?” What specific practice(s) could help us to cultivate a heart of forgiveness?

### **Exercising the Spiritual Forgiveness Muscle: Love (Bless) the Enemy**

Lewis was firmly convinced that the “hard work of forgiveness” consists in training our spiritual muscles. Forgiveness doesn’t stand alone; it is embedded and embodied in a way of life. Jesus insists that God does good, extends His mercy, to the just and unjust alike (cf Matt 5:45). To save us from the danger of raw, relentless rumination and revenge. He lays down a startling, counterintuitive challenge: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...”

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<sup>17</sup> Worthington, Everett. *Forgiving and Reconciling: Bridges to Wholeness and Hope*. (Intervarsity Press, 2003), 84.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis repeats this idea in *The Weight of Glory*: “You must make every effort to kill every taste of resentment in your own heart—every wish to humiliate or hurt him or to pay him out”.

(Lk 6:27; Matt 5:44). Love your enemy? Could this actually be the antidote to the poison of enmity?<sup>19</sup> Interpret this imperative as it stands. Jesus instructs us to restrain and redirect our thinking toward more constructive outcomes. He calls us to a transformation of the heart—calls us to take the radical step that involves a commitment to overcoming evil by doing good! Love of enemies is the recognition that the enemy, too, is a child of God. This surely offers a stunning contrast to one’s instinctive tendency to view the enemy as less than human.

Lewis coaxes, unsettles us with uncompromising bluntness: “The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less. (MC 116) This is a graced endeavor—a concrete, tangible aspect of “learning Christ” (Eph 4:20)

Realizing that genuine Christian love involves the effective willing of the good of the other Lewis counsels: “... we must try to feel about the enemy as we feel about ourselves- to wish that he were not bad, to hope that he may, in this world or another, be cured; in fact to wish his good. That is what is meant in the Bible by loving him: wishing his good, not feeling fond of him nor saying he is nice when he is not.” (MC, 108) Jesus’ amazing words are meant to disconcert us: “I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be children of God” (Mt 5:44; cf Lk 6:27). I can love you (desire your good) by blessing you, praying for you. -especially and precisely because you are someone whom I experience as an enemy. Enfleshing this involves the special strength of the Spirit! It is interesting to note a similar yet slightly nuanced Scriptural expansion: “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing” (1Pet 3:9). One must pray to release the judgmental thoughts, the nasty feelings—and replace them with empathy and compassion One must clear away, root out the condemnation, the sarcasm, the criticism, and complaining and extend God’s gift of mercy in the form of blessing!

Perhaps it would be beneficial to remember that after God called Abraham, He gave him a double promise. The first was: “I will bless you.” The second was: I will make you to “be a blessing” (Gen 12:1-3). Indeed, God has blest us fully in the redeeming love of Christ! Consequently, I am now called to “be a blessing.” Within the Biblical ambit St. Paul insists that we “be imitators of God” and “live in love as Christ loved us” (Eph 5:102). God gives in light of His desire for our good. He is always the giver who seeks the good We can only “be a blessing” by “blessing.” Lewis shares his own application: : “If I find it difficult to forgive those who bullied me at school, let me, at that very moment, remember, and pray for, those I bullied” (LM 28)

Astonishingly it is love, precisely Christ-like sacrificial love that wants the situation righted, healed, transformed. Forgiving involves the “tussle” of daily, diligent discipline. We slowly, ever so slowly, come to understand that we must change our thinking ( rumination) in order to reduce or eliminate the bitter feelings (resentment). We must accept, even more,

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<sup>19</sup> Enemy and enmity spring from the Latin *inanimicus*; “not-friend.”

embrace the fact that the biblical command to love, to bless the enemy invites us to embody redemptive love. In light of Lewis' insight about "pretending" we can move into the realm of exercising a pre-meditated mercy. We can ask for the grace to daily desire the good of the other, to "pray for those who persecute" by asking God to "bless" (favor with spiritual/physical good) our enemy. I think Lewis would advise us to build a bridge of love by praying the the Aaronic blessing "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace." (Num. 6:22-27). Praying this actively, intentionally for the "enemy" would be an act of embodied mercy!

Thus, to embrace the heart of the Christian faith is the challenge to go above and beyond: "There is no use in talking as if forgiveness were easy. We all know the old joke, "You've given up smoking once; I've given it up a dozen times." In the same way I could say of a certain man, 'Have I forgiven him for what he did that day? I've forgiven him more times than I can count.'" For we find that that the work of forgiveness has to be done over and over again" (P 24-25) Let's pray for the grace to enter that risky territory which is marked by the graced commitment to hit the "rats of resentment" on the head—and surprise our enemy with a benevolent blessing. This is the miracle we can experience—not just once, but over and over again, as we cultivate a heart of forgiveness—forgiving others as He has forgiven us.



## ERWIN PANOFSKY'S GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

Daniel J. Heisey\*

Europe's loss is often America's gain. In particular, the 1930s saw such different but talented men as a classicist, Werner Jaeger, an actor, Peter Lorre, and a conductor, Bruno Walter, come to the United States from Germany in order to flee the increasingly violent intolerance of National Socialism.<sup>1</sup> Within that wave of intellectual refugees was an historian of art, Erwin Panofsky. Had Panofsky stayed in Germany, had his reason for fleeing not existed, it is unlikely he would have lectured at Saint Vincent College, a small Benedictine school for the liberal arts in western Pennsylvania. As tends to happen, tragic events in due time brought pleasant results, however unforeseen.

In December of 1948, at Saint Vincent, Panofsky delivered the second annual Wimmer Lecture. The lectures honored the memory of the founder-abbot of Saint Vincent, Boniface Wimmer (1809-1887). Panofsky's predecessor had been Kenneth J. Conant of Harvard; the third annual Wimmer Lecture was by Monsignor Gerald B. Phelan, president of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto. Conant, an authority on the Benedictine abbey of Cluny, had spoken on "Benedictine Contributions to Church Architecture," and Phelan, a Thomist, spoke on "The Wisdom of Saint Anselm." Both lecturers will feature later in this paper. Panofsky's topic, combining the architectural and philosophical fields, was "Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism." The lecture series, noted for its weighty themes, lasted twenty-four years, and the Archabbey Press published most of the lectures.<sup>2</sup>

As Norman F. Cantor put it, Panofsky had the touch that turned straw into gold. Cantor cited as an example, "an obscure American Catholic college" asking Panofsky to lecture on Gothic architecture and the resulting book going through ten printings in a decade.<sup>3</sup> Saint Vincent prides itself on being the first Benedictine monastery in the United States, so it might think itself less obscure than did Cantor, a transplanted Canadian never shy with his assessments. Nevertheless, it is worth considering why Panofsky's lecture has been in print, and translated into nearly a dozen languages, for more than fifty years.<sup>4</sup> This paper will look at Panofsky's small but enduring work, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, comparing it with

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<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon, of course, was not limited to the United States: one recalls, for example, a classicist, Arnaldo Momigliano, fleeing Italy for England. See Peter Brown, "Arnaldo Dante Momigliano, 1908-1987," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74 (1989): 405-442; Oswyn Murray, "Arnaldo Momigliano, 1908-1987," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987): xi-xii; Oswyn Murray, "Arnaldo Momigliano in England," *History and Theory* 30 (December, 1991): 49-64.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Oetgen, *Mission to America: A History of Saint Vincent Archabbey, the First Benedictine Monastery in the United States* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 421-422. For Wimmer, see Jerome Oetgen, *An American Abbot: Boniface Wimmer, O. S. B., 1809-1887* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997); Joel Rippinger, *The Benedictine Order in the United States: An Interpretive History* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 19-43.

<sup>3</sup> Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 176.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent translation is by Julia Ramírez Blanco, *La arquitectura gótica y la escolástica*, La Biblioteca Azul, serie mínima 17 (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 2007).

Henry Adams' classic, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* to consider why modern people still turn to medieval culture.

### Erwin Panofsky

In order to appreciate better *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, a brief sketch of Panofsky's life may help. Erwin Panofsky was born in 1892 in Hanover, a city of stolid burghers in northern Germany.<sup>5</sup> To give some historical perspective, it is helpful to recall that he was the same age as J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973). While Tolkien was mired in the trenches of the First World War, however, Panofsky had achieved his doctorate from Freiburg. In 1915 Panofsky published his first book; the following year, he was married, twin sons arriving in due course. Although Panofsky had inherited a private income, the economic instability of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) forced him to accept a teaching position at the new University of Hamburg. For part of the year he also taught at New York University.

In 1933, while Panofsky was in New York, the National Socialist (Nazi) government fired all Jewish professors.<sup>6</sup> Other punitive acts, given the force of law, befell the Jews in Germany. Panofsky returned to Hamburg to sever ties and oversee the doctoral examinations of "a few loyal students."<sup>7</sup> Then Panofsky and his family left Hamburg for New York. As he wrote twenty years later in his essay on art history in the United States, Panofsky remained grateful for "the selfless efforts of my American friends and colleagues, unforgettable and unforgotten."<sup>8</sup> As he began a new life as an exile, he taught both at New York University and Princeton University.

In 1935, Panofsky accepted a position at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, perhaps most famous at that time for providing a haven for Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Panofsky described the Institute as a place where "its members do their research work openly and their teaching surreptitiously, whereas the opposite is true of so many other institutions of learning."<sup>9</sup> Once the Panofskys had settled in, the professor dubbed their new house "Wit's End". From there he adjusted to his new country and, despite dislocation, continued to establish himself as an innovative critic of art. Since the 1920s, he had been

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<sup>5</sup> See William S. Heckscher, "Erwin Panofsky: A Curriculum Vitae," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University*, 28 (1969): 4-21; Richard Krautheimer and Kurt Weitzman, "Erwin Panofsky," *Speculum* 44 (July, 1969): 530-531; Rensselaer W. Lee, "Erwin Panofsky," *Art Journal* 27 (Summer, 1968): 368-370; Michael Podro, "Erwin Panofsky," *The Dictionary of Art* 24 (New York: Grove, 1996, 1998), 16-17; Michael Ann Holly, "Erwin Panofsky," *The Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 8 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 489-491; Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, 174-188.

<sup>6</sup> See Martin Gilbert, *From the Ends of the Earth: The Jews in the Twentieth Century* (London: Cassell and Co., 2001), 151-154.

<sup>7</sup> Erwin Panofsky, "Three Decades of Art History in the United States: Impressions of a Transplanted European," *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 321.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

developing his insight that art conveys *ideas*.<sup>10</sup> This theme informed his lecture at Saint Vincent on Gothic architecture and Scholasticism.

Over the years, honors were heaped upon him, from a dozen honorary degrees to a two-volume Festschrift.<sup>11</sup> Learned societies, such as the British Academy, the American Philosophical Society, and the Medieval Academy of America, paid him homage. Posthumous tributes, especially marking his one-hundredth birthday, bore witness to his enduring importance.

Panofsky died in 1968 at Princeton; twenty-five years later, former students marked his centenary with an academic symposium.<sup>12</sup> In Hamburg there was also a symposium, organized by the university where he had taught before his exile.<sup>13</sup> While each centennial symposium addressed Panofsky's many interests in the history of art, both omitted discussion of his work on Gothic architecture and Scholastic thought, an aspect of his research to which we now turn.

### Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism

Erwin Panofsky's Wimmer Lecture, "Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism," filled a niche in the field of medieval studies. Panofsky simply said by way of preface that it was but "another diffident attempt at correlating Gothic architecture and Scholasticism," and one that "is bound to be looked upon with suspicion by both historians of art and historians of philosophy."<sup>14</sup>

Other scholars have been less reserved. Kenneth J. Conant, reviewing it in 1953 for the journal *Speculum*, called it an "absorbing book."<sup>15</sup> Forty-one years later, Carl Landauer, writing in *Renaissance Quarterly*, saw in Panofsky's lecture the influence of Etienne Gilson and observed that the book "reads as if it were written by a convinced neo-Thomist."<sup>16</sup> Even the hard-to-please Norman F. Cantor said that this "fragile jewel... is a beautiful piece of speculative interpretation."<sup>17</sup> It is a book that repays thoughtful re-reading.

Characteristically, Panofsky drew upon his knowledge of art and philosophy and saw parallels. He saw that the Schoolmen knew that reason could not prove religious doctrine,

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<sup>10</sup> Joan Hart, "Erwin Panofsky and Karl Mannheim: A Dialogue on Interpretation," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Spring, 1993): 551; see also Jan Bialostocki, "Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968): Thinker, Historian, Human Being," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 4 (1970): 82: "Panofsky's desire to link ideas and forms, art and humanistic thought was expressed in the masterly parallel of *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*."

<sup>11</sup> Millard Meiss, ed., *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, 2 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1961). Volume 1, viii-xxi, has a bibliography of Panofsky's writings.

<sup>12</sup> Irving Lavin, ed., *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968)* (Princeton: Institute for Advanced Study, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "A Symposium on Erwin Panofsky," *The Burlington Magazine* 134 (August, 1992): 547-548.

<sup>14</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1951), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth John Conant, review in *Speculum* 28 (July, 1953): 606.

<sup>16</sup> Carl Landauer, "Erwin Panofsky and the Renaissance of the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (Summer, 1994): 262.

<sup>17</sup> Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, 180.

but reason could make it manifest by shedding clear light upon it. Panofsky understood that the Scholastic mind “insisted upon a gratuitous clarification of function through form,” and equally that it “insisted upon a gratuitous clarification of thought through language.”<sup>18</sup> Panofsky summed up what he called a mental habit given to *manifestatio*, clarification. “A man imbued with the Scholastic habit [of mind],” he said, “would look upon the mode of architectural presentation, just as he looked upon the mode of literary presentation, from the point of view of *manifestatio*.”<sup>19</sup> All the elements of a cathedral or an argument were carefully articulated and clearly went together to form a reasoned whole.

The architects of that same era likewise sought clarity of function through form, and the function of a church was the worship of God through the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The Catholic faith teaches that Christ, while being fully divine, was also “of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,” to use the words of the Athanasian Creed. Hence the importance in Catholic culture not only of the intellect, but also of tangible material, whether bread and wine or stone and glass.<sup>20</sup> Panofsky’s insight was that through proportion and distinction of parts, a Gothic cathedral was as solid and precise in its service of Catholic doctrine as was the treatise of a Scholastic theologian.<sup>21</sup>

A few years before speaking at Saint Vincent, Panofsky had written about the era “when art had reached the stage of Romanesque and theology the stage of scholasticism.”<sup>22</sup> He noted the medieval interest in classical antiquity and he explained that, by the time of Thomas Aquinas, classical patterns of sculpture as well as philosophy were “absorbed in the mediaeval system of thought and imagination.”<sup>23</sup> The Middle Ages of Gothic architecture and Scholasticism must be seen, Panofsky said, as a transformation of antiquity. While all educated people of that time wrote in Latin, they could also write in their vernacular: It was the age of Dante as well as that of Aquinas. Likewise, medieval architects translated ancient Roman techniques such as vaulting and arches into the vernacular we call Gothic.

Just as medieval people turned for precedents to ancient Rome, so they turned for inspiration to Jerusalem. In antiquity, both cities had shared a culture indebted to Greece, although in the end, a Jew was always an outsider.<sup>24</sup> Panofsky, refugee from Nazi Germany, poignantly noted the ambivalent attitude medieval Christians had towards the Jews. He pointed out that on a portal of the cathedral in Bamberg, Bavaria, the sculptor could portray the apostles standing on the shoulders of the prophets, while on the same portal “the Synagogue could be depicted as a blind, benighted enemy, surmounting a Jew whose eyes are

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<sup>18</sup> Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 59-60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Barron, *Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 47-48; see also David Gelernter, “The Gothic Vision,” *The Weekly Standard* (2 February, 2009): 36; Jon M. Sweeney, “Arranged by Measure,” *America* (5-12 July, 2010): 27-30.

<sup>22</sup> Erwin Panofsky, “Renaissance and Resuscitations,” *The Kenyon Review* 6 (Spring, 1944), 213.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>24</sup> See Glen Bowersock, “The Roman Empire and the Clash of Civilizations,” *The Berlin Journal* 14 (Spring, 2007): 4-9.



put out by the devil.”<sup>25</sup> The Old Testament was recognized as the basis for the New, yet Judaism was associated with Judas.

With a background in the ancient classics, Panofsky was a careful student of history, and so in his Wimmer Lecture he underscored the importance to his thesis of the work of Benedictine monks. “And as the Scholastic movement, prepared by Benedictine learning,” wrote Panofsky, “was carried on... by the Dominicans and Franciscans, so did the Gothic style, prepared in Benedictine monasteries... achieve its culmination in the great city churches.”<sup>26</sup>

Thus, before Panofsky could discuss Scholastic thought and its relation to Gothic arches, he had to refer to the monastic and intellectual life fostered by the Benedictines. Jean Leclercq, writing shortly after Panofsky’s lecture, made the same point. “Just as the cathedrals of the thirteenth century have been compared to theological summas,” he said, “monastic writings of the Romanesque period may be likened to the abbey churches of the period.”<sup>27</sup> Panofsky referred to Chartres and Leclercq, Benedictine monk of an abbey in Luxembourg, could easily have had in mind the monastic church at Mont Saint Michel.

Students with time to spare can enjoy the elegant and witty *tour de force* of Henry Adams (1838-1918) and his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904), still in print after a hundred years. Adams, brilliant but eccentric, takes his readers on a stroll through the grand eleventh- and twelfth-century churches of northern France; as Adams intended, one luxuriates in the impression of a wise old uncle playing raconteur to an adoring but erudite niece. One of Adams’ nieces recalled, “We forced the role of guide, philosopher, and friend upon him, but he played up to it delightfully.”<sup>28</sup> Adams’ book gives the impression of sunlight dappling through stained glass. In contrast, Panofsky’s lecture is incandescent; he is direct and striking, making in a paragraph a point Adams makes in pages.

Moreover, Adams viewed the medieval terrain from another world. Whereas Adams and his niece were tourists, lapsed Boston Protestants on holiday, Panofsky had the inner sense of a native of the country. “Everyone who has lived since the sixteenth century,” Adams declared, “has felt a deep distrust of everyone who lived before it, and of everyone who believed in the middle ages.”<sup>29</sup> Panofsky did not share the belief of the medieval cleric or craftsman, but he trusted the good faith of builders and believers of the Middle Ages. Adams, no fool, was aware of his own limitations, noting that he and his fellow tourists had a “simple faith in ourselves.”<sup>30</sup> It is this blundering, optimistic confidence that often makes Europeans wince when in the presence of a clutch of American tourists.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 226; compare with Barron, *Heaven in Stone and Glass*, 68. See also David Jacobs, *Master Builders of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 88.

<sup>26</sup> Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 249.

<sup>28</sup> Abigail Adams Homans, *Education by Uncles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 49.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904, 1924), 139.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 138. See Daniel J. Heisey, “Medievalists for Breakfast: Charles Homer Haskins Meets Henry Adams,” *Medieval Academy News* 159 (Winter, 2007): 6.

Aware of Adams' book, Panofsky also saw the shortcomings of this approach. He recognized that the study he undertook had once been "the private hobby of such men of affairs and letters as Henry Adams."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it is akin to appreciating idiomatic nuances; often a second language, despite diligent study, remains elusive. Here an anecdote surviving in the oral tradition of Saint Vincent is worth recounting. The Benedictine monks, accustomed in those days to studying and praying in Latin, noted that Panofsky's pronunciation of the language of the Church was better than theirs. One wonders whether Latin with an American accent was jarring to Panofsky. Latin was, after all, a European tongue, foreign to Americans.

Likewise, Adams' several visits to medieval cathedrals could not compensate for Panofsky growing up amongst them. Nonetheless, a visitor's or a tourist's insights can be invaluable and for all its quirks medievalists would be the poorer without Adams' book. These two great works of medieval studies—one vast, another lean—complement one another. Yet, students of the period should begin with Panofsky.

Like the architectural masterpieces, one could say that the spiritual monuments these two histories describe and discuss—these books by Adams and Panofsky—are in their way classics. When in 1944 T. S. Eliot set about defining a classic, he concluded that a classic results from the maturity of a culture.<sup>32</sup> Eliot was addressing a society of British classicists and so his focus was on Vergil (or Virgil) and the classics surviving from ancient Greece and Rome. Eliot was an American who loved and lived in England; he saw classical antiquity pulsing through the Protestant culture of Britain and her colonies and former colonies. Fifty years later, J. M. Coetzee, a South African who would in time join Eliot as a Nobel Laureate, observed that a classic survives not only barbarism but also criticism.<sup>33</sup>

Like his Catholic contemporary, Tolkien, Panofsky was drawn to the Christian civilization that emerged from the pagan world of Vergil. During the time after Vergil, when Latin turned from gold to silver, there emerged, like a minor theme in music that recurs until it reaches crescendo, the literature and liturgy of the Church. While Tolkien used his love of the early Middle Ages to create his own Middle Earth, Panofsky studied the art and architecture of the medieval world and related it to the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas and the poetry of Dante. It seems possible that these twentieth-century students of medieval culture, one from Germany, the other from England by way of South Africa, felt an affinity for what has survived within Western civilization because they came of age when so much of that civilization seemed to be breaking apart under the hammer, if not the sickle.

In any event, as the tide of the twentieth century recedes, the books left on what Shakespeare called in Sonnet 60 "the pebbled shore" are worth our while. Within that span of a hundred years more books were published than ever before, yet few will survive time's erosion of public memory. Nevertheless, much to the chagrin of the intelligentsia, there stands Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, still around after sixty years.<sup>34</sup> As noted, Henry Adams'

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<sup>31</sup> Panofsky, "Three Decades of Art History in the United States," *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 324.

<sup>32</sup> T. S. Eliot, *What Is A Classic?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), 10.

<sup>33</sup> J. M. Coetzee, "What is a Classic?," in *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays, 1986-1999* (New York: Viking, 2001), 16.

<sup>34</sup> See Joseph Pearce, *Tolkien: Man and Myth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 1-10.

masterpiece, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, shows no signs of going out of print. Also among the books on our list of survivors from the last century is, of course, Panofsky's *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. Even if we set aside Tolkien's great work because it is fiction, we must reflect upon why people continue to return to medieval civilization by reading Adams and Panofsky.

### **Panofsky's Contribution**

As we have seen, Panofsky and Adams wrote now-classic works on medieval culture and it is instructive to review the various approaches people take today with respect to the Middle Ages. For some, what has survived from the past, whether ancient or medieval, is of archaeological interest. "Bare ruined choirs," to use Shakespeare's well-worn phrase from Sonnet 73, have the same fascination for certain scholars that kivas or castles have for others. This archaeological approach believes that these physical remnants are worth studying in their own right. While those artifacts do hold intrinsic value, that approach is often utilitarian and matter of fact, having much in common with photography; the archaeological approach is content collecting specimens and cataloguing them.

Another approach to relics of the medieval past is purely aesthetic. This approach loves, for example, to listen to Gregorian chant, although its original purpose of conveying prayer is as remote to this approach as taking seriously a Hittite incantation for rain. One gathers that Henry Adams could be taken to represent this method. For this approach, what remains of the Middle Ages deserves, perhaps demands, one's admiration, but integrating it into one's world view is impossible. What distinguishes the aesthetic approach from the archaeological approach is a sense of nostalgia. If the archaeological approach is like photography, the aesthetic approach resembles impressionist painting, best seen at a distance. The archaeological approach collects items from the past; the aesthetic views them with a sigh in a museum.

Rather than be torn between these two paths, Erwin Panofsky points to a third way. His approach integrates the archaeological and the aesthetic; it accepts the intrinsic interest of medieval architecture and philosophy and it embraces the beauty that they convey. Panofsky, though, learned well from the Thomists of the first half of the twentieth century. "Christian revelation," wrote Gerald B. Phelan, "transposed philosophical concepts to a new status."<sup>35</sup> Phelan was reviewing Etienne Gilson's *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, an influence on Panofsky.

According to Phelan and Gilson, faith transformed reason, it did not annihilate it. "Christianity communicated to it [Greek philosophy] some share of its own vitality," Gilson said, "and enabled it to enter on a new career."<sup>36</sup> Panofsky also saw the harmony between lines of thought and lines of sight. "The men of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," Panofsky told the monks and students at Saint Vincent, sought "to establish the unity of

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<sup>35</sup> Gerald B. Phelan, "A Christian Philosophy," *The Commonweal* (23 January, 1937): 367.

<sup>36</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 424.

truth.”<sup>37</sup> They sought this unity in the disputations of their schools and the designs of their churches.

A year after Panofsky spoke at Saint Vincent, Phelan, as we have seen, delivered the college’s annual Wimmer Lecture. Phelan talked about a Benedictine monk of the eleventh century, Saint Anselm of Canterbury, who said in his *Proslogion*, it was a work of *fides quaerens intellectum*, “faith seeking understanding.” Sometimes modern scholars call Saint Anselm the Last of the Church Fathers and the First Scholastic; he gets put in the category of a transitional figure, a man standing for an epochal development in Western society. Panofsky would have pointed out that Saint Anselm’s early Scholastic method matched the Gothic work then being done on Canterbury cathedral.

Like Erwin Panofsky, Saint Anselm inherited a rich tapestry of art and philosophy, architecture and faith. Saint Anselm, a native of Aosta, a village in the Italian Alps, could freely believe and study and travel because there was a common culture, sharing ancient classics and Christian communion. Panofsky, although outside the Christian communion, flourished within its history and its heritage with all its brilliance and brutality. Whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, people, composites of reasonable souls and human flesh, return to that lost world shaped by antiquity and Christianity where, at its best, order and charity, truth and beauty, go hand in hand.

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<sup>37</sup> Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 28.

## BEYOND DOMINION AND STEWARDSHIP: HUMANITY AND NATURE IN PURITAN THEOLOGY

Sarah Irving\*

Amidst the burgeoning public consciousness of climate change in recent years, theologians have reflected extensively upon the topic of humanity's proper relationship to nature. In the course of this endeavor, various strands of the Christian tradition have come under close scrutiny. In particular, early modern Puritans have often been criticized for aspects of their thought that, some scholars have argued, legitimated an exploitative attitude toward nature. Theologians and historians alike have contended that the Puritans displayed antipathy toward the North American wilderness, and that they were focused on the idea of conquering nature.

This article challenges this interpretation of early modern Puritan theology. I recover an Anglo-American Puritan tradition in which attitudes toward nature were much more complex and, indeed, the story is not quite so disheartening. Rather, in the work of Jonathan Edwards, John Bunyan, Robert Boyle and others, there are frequent condemnations of mankind's sinful *misuse* of nature. Moreover, the creation is understood in terms of its role in the eschatological project of building the Kingdom of Christ on earth. As such, the Puritans were concerned that nature's resources, like talents, not be squandered; the fruits of the creation must be used for "the least of these", to feed and clothe their neighbors.

I argue that, interestingly, the categories of dominion and stewardship were not at the forefront of this Puritan tradition. Rather, the tradition was centered upon the all-encompassing project of rebuilding and redeeming the whole of God's creation, which, as Jonathan Edwards was ever keen to assure his followers, groans in travail (Rom 8). After recovering this Puritan theological tradition and exploring its central ideas in some depth, the last section of this article suggests that moving beyond the classic dominion/stewardship dichotomy has the potential to enrich contemporary theological discussion about the church's responsibilities toward the environment.

### Nature, Sin and Eschatology in Early Modern Puritan Thought

Early modern Christianity has long been at the centre of studies of humanity's changing attitudes toward nature. As far back as 1967, a famous article by historian Lynn White Jr. argued that Christian theology's view of the relationship between humanity and nature helped to undergird the long Western history of mastery over—and exploitation of—the natural world.

Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image [...] By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.<sup>1</sup>

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Since White's article was published, a rich tradition in historical theology has arisen challenging White's thesis and the scholarly debate since has moved on considerably. In recent years, a number of historians and philosophers have explored the early modern Puritan tradition and found it wanting. Some, such as Carolyn Merchant, have theorized that there existed a connection between the Puritans' role in the origins of modern science and the effects that the so-called Scientific Revolution had on attitudes toward nature.<sup>2</sup> Others, such as J. Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson have emphasized the Puritan dichotomy of civilization and nature in American history which, they argue, drew heavily upon the Puritans' disdain for the "wilderness". Yet, while these historians and philosophers have taken the Puritans' attitudes toward nature as their subject matter, their interpretations are not sufficiently attuned to the complexities of Puritan theology.<sup>3</sup>

This dominant interpretation of Puritan thought deserves a challenge. Far from being a resource to be exploited or for man to have simple "dominion" over, early modern Puritan thought understood nature as part of a theology of sin and eschatology. The Puritans cautioned strongly against humanity's *misuse* of nature and their vision of man's proper relationship with nature was grounded in a sense of nature's divinely intended purpose.

Although the term "Puritan" can be used widely, for the purposes of this article, the Puritan tradition considered is the Anglo-American strand of theology that arose as a development of Calvinist theology. Its key thinkers—including Robert Boyle and John Bunyan in England, and John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, and Jonathan Edwards in North America—emphasized the severity of the effects of humanity's sin, the sovereignty and providence of God, and the corruption of the present world. They were also, however, largely post-millennial thinkers. That is, they believed that the second coming of Christ would occur *after* His gradual perfection of the world. For this reason, the Puritans—particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries—had a strong social ethic. They believed in helping, as far as possible, to transform the earth into the image of the kingdom of heaven.

One of the most important and foundational thinkers for the Puritan tradition was Francis Bacon who was quoted often by Puritanism's champions. Bacon gave rise to the most famous articulation of what became the Puritans' own steadfast conviction that humanity must work toward repairing the profound effects of the Fall:

For by his fall man lost both his state of innocence and his command over created things. However, both of these losses can to some extent be made good even in this life, the former by religion and faith, the latter by the arts and sciences. For the curse did not quite put creation into a state of unremitting rebellion, but by virtue of that injunction 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread', it is now by various labours...to allow man his bread or, in other words, for the use of human life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Townsend White, Jr, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, 155 (Number 3767), 1967, p.1205.

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperOne, 1990)

<sup>3</sup> J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998);

<sup>4</sup> Francis Bacon, Bacon, *Instauratio Magna* [1620] in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. R. Spedding, L.

In other words, humanity's lost command over the creation can in fact be mitigated somewhat by the proper direction of human labor such that the creation is put to "the use of human life". This was an idea echoed by Puritan thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic. Convinced of the all-encompassing effects of human sin, and acutely conscious of what they believed were the impending final ages of the earth, Puritans were adamant that humanity engage itself in transforming the sinful world; partly to show gratitude for the undeserved gift of God's grace and partly out of a sense that the elect were called to serve. H. Richard Niebuhr was right to place the Puritan tradition in his conversionist category, "Christ the Transformer of Culture".<sup>5</sup>

Robert Boyle, well known as one of the founders of modern science, was also a significant theologian and echoed Bacon's conviction about mankind and nature. Boyle often referred to the way in which God's creation was made for man's purposes. "Much of this Visible World was made for the use of Man", Boyle wrote, proceeding to explain that we know this not only because of the "Commission given to the first Progenitors of Mankind, to replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowls of the Air, and over all the Earth", but also because the Psalmist reminds us that "thou hast madest him to have Dominion over the Works of thy Hands, thou has put all things under his Feet."<sup>6</sup>

It is not difficult to see how easy it is to misread these statements about the Creation and misinterpret Bacon and Boyle's references to the idea that the Creation is made by God for the purposes of mankind as a *carte blanche* license for humanity to exploit nature. Indeed, it is little wonder when Boyle can be quoted out of context stating, "it is no great presumption to conceive, that the rest of the Creatures were made for Man".<sup>7</sup> I want to suggest, however, that such an interpretation oversimplifies and misreads Puritan theology. When we explore the theology of Puritans more closely, we see that while they view nature as a resource for humanity, it is God who dictates the proper purposes of that resource. Moreover, the profoundly sinful character of humanity means that not only have we sinfully *misused* nature to our own selfish ends, but that we must plunge ourselves into the task of using nature to build Christ's kingdom so that Christian communities might be, as John Winthrop put it when he drew upon Matthew 5, "a city upon a Hill, a light unto the world".<sup>8</sup>

The best place to begin is with Jonathan Edwards who was deeply influenced both by Bacon and Boyle. We find Edwards echoing Bacon and Boyle's ideas about the way in which the creation was a gift to man to be used for his benefit. When we tease out Edwards' thoughts on the subject, we find that his understanding of humanity's relationship to nature is shaped by his view of human sin.

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Ellis, and D. D. Heath. 14 vols. (London: Longman, 1857-74), p.447.

<sup>5</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York:Harper and Row, 2001 [1951]).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Boyle, "Of the Usefulness of Experimental Philosophy" [1663] in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter and E. B. Davis. 14 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), Volume 3, p.215.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216

<sup>8</sup> John Winthrop Jr. in "Christian Charity, a Model Hereof" (1630), reprinted in David D. Hall, ed., *Puritans in the New World: a Critical Anthology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.169.

The visible world has now for many ages been subjected to sin, and made as it were a servant to it, through the abusive improvement that man, who has the dominion over the creatures, puts the creatures to. The sun is a sort of servant to all manner of wickedness, as its light and other beneficial influences are abused by men, and made subservient to their lusts and sinful purposes. So of the rain, and fruits of the earth, and the brute animals, and all other parts of the visible creation; they all serve men's corruption, and obey their sinful will.<sup>9</sup>

Far from being a resource for humanity to exploit, the fact that man has put the creation to his own use represents his turning away from God. But what did the Puritan tradition see as God's intended use for the creation? How was man to use it in the proper way and for the right ends? The answer lies in the Puritans' view of eschatology, specifically in their view of humanity's calling to participate in Christ's gradual perfection of the *saeculum*.

When John Winthrop gave his now famous sermon "Christian Charity, a Model Hereof" shortly before embarking upon his voyage to New England in April 1630, he made clear that the communities of Puritans must make manifest Christ's sacrificial love in their own communities. This meant following the counsel of Micah [6:8] "to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God".<sup>10</sup> In essence, it meant that the communities that the Puritans were to build should bring a glimpse of heaven to earth.

the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us...so that we shall see much more of his wisdom power goodness and truth than formerly we have been acquainted with...that men shall say of the succeeding plantations: the Lord make it like that of New England: for we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill [Matt 5:14], the eyes of all people are upon us.<sup>11</sup>

Not long after Winthrop's sermon, Cotton Mather, the Puritan minister in New England, urged his followers actively to take part in the perfection of the world. "Embrace one another, and with United Endeavours, and an heavenly Harmony, and Agreement, prosecute Good Purposes, to advance Piety, and the Kingdom of God".<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the project of perfecting the world meant that nature, too, would be perfected. "Were what God hath spoken duly regarded...the World would soon be revived into a desirable Garden of God, and Mankind would be fetch'd up into very comfortable Circumstances; till then the World continues in a wretched Condition."<sup>13</sup> In short, the Puritans understood nature as part of their theologies of sin and eschatology: man had sinned and so nature too, had fallen. As we will observe in the next section, it was for this reason that nature was understood as a wilderness. It was now man's task to use nature for its appropriate ends, but this was not an act of exploitation, rather, it was seeking out its fruits and using them to aid human life. This was participating in Christ's gradual perfection of the earth. The task of using nature for its appropriate purpose consisted of two main elements; the earth—envisioned by the Puritans

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings* [1723], *WJE Online*, Vol 5. Ed. Stephen J. Stein, p.345.

<sup>10</sup> John Winthrop, quoting Micah 6:8, in "Christian Charity, a Model Hereof" (1630), reprinted in David D. Hall *Puritans*, p.169

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>12</sup> Cotton Mather *The Stone Cut out of the Mountain* [1716] (Boston: 1716), p.13.

<sup>13</sup> Cotton Mather, *The Christian Philosopher*. [1721], ed. Winton U. Solberg. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 309.



as a wilderness—must be made fruitful again; and that nature would yield the kind of knowledge that could be used for the relief of mankind’s estate.

### The Fruitfulness of the Earth

“The whole earth is the Lord’s garden”, proclaimed John Winthrop before departing England for the New World.<sup>14</sup> Upon arriving in New England, however, the Puritans’ central metaphor for understanding the natural environment they encountered soon became that of the wilderness. In many ways, this was an unsurprising choice, for it signified their sense of affinity with the experience of the Exodus as well as recalling the trials of both John the Baptist and Christ himself. The Puritan minister and poet Samuel Danforth (1626-1674) typified much of the reflective writing of the immigrants to New England. In his election sermon of 1670 titled, “A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand into the Wilderness”, Danforth recalled Jesus’s words to the crowd about John in Matthew 11:7-9, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing, are in kings’ houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet”.<sup>15</sup>

Danforth used Jesus’ question as a call to his own audience to reconsider “what it was that drew them into the wilderness, and to consider that it was not the expectation of ludicrous levity, nor of courtly pomp and delicacy, but of the free and clear dispensation of the gospel and kingdom of God.”<sup>16</sup> For Danforth, the wilderness metaphor embodied both the Puritans’ struggle to survive amidst the harsh physicality of New England’s natural environment, as well as their internal spiritual trials. Drawing upon Proverbs, he observed of his own environs that, “Yea the vineyard is all overgrown with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof [Prov 24:31]”.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the Puritans imagined the natural environment as a wilderness did not, however, indicate contempt for it. Firstly, as we saw with Danforth, the use of the metaphor was as much about finding in nature an appropriate symbol for the Puritans’ inner journey. More importantly, however, the “wild” state of the creation signified its misuse by sinful humanity; it symbolized the fact that humanity had shirked its responsibilities toward the rest of the creation. In the first section, we saw briefly that Jonathan Edwards argued that mankind had made the rest of the creation servants of his own corruption. For Edwards, this was a significant point which he developed in the context of his understanding of the purposes of man, and of nature. In a chapter on Providence, in his *Miscellanies*, Edwards wrote that,

As man is made capable of knowing his Creator, so he is capable of knowing his will in many things...For ‘tis this way, principally, that he comes to know there is a God, even by seeing the final causes of things, seeing that such and such things are plainly designed and contrived for such and such ends. And therefore, he is capable of either

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<sup>14</sup> John Winthrop Jr. ‘Christian Charity’, in David D.Hall., ed., *Puritans*, p.169.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Danforth, ‘A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand into the Wilderness’, reprinted in David D. Hall *Puritans* p. 337.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

complying with the will of his Creator...or of setting himself against the Creator's design...So he may use that dominion over the creatures that the Creator has given him, against the ends to which they were given.<sup>18</sup>

Edwards' stern insistence that God had express intentions for the Creation—and that mankind had often ignored these—is a striking point. Far from advocating the idea that mankind use nature for his own ends, Edwards was arguing that humanity's relationship with nature was entirely to be governed by God's design. The reason this is a striking point is that in recent times the idea that mankind was given nature to use—indeed, to have “dominion” over—has too often slipped into the idea that mankind could therefore exploit the creation for his own ends. But we see that in the case of the Puritans, this was far from the case. They had an acute appreciation of the fact that the earth was the creation of God; indeed, this is why the Puritans were so interested in natural theology: the Creation bespoke the design of the creator God. As the minister and poet Edward Taylor wrote,

Who Lac'de and Fillitted the earth so fine  
With Rivers like green Ribbons Smaragdine?  
Who made the Sea's its Delvedge, and its locks  
Like a Quilt Ball within a Silver Box?<sup>19</sup>

The Puritans took very seriously the question of God's purposes for mankind, and for the Creation. Edwards was clear that, although the Creation was groaning in travail, it was God's intention—and therefore mankind's task—to render it fruitful again. Edwards drew explicitly upon the Psalms, Isaiah, and Amos to envision the coming perfection of the world, which would be “a time wherein the earth shall be abundantly fruitful (Psalms 67:6; Isaiah 30:23-24; Amos 9:14).”<sup>20</sup> Like Edwards, Cotton Mather described the way in which “the Earth which now lies like a hideous Wilderness, overrun with Thorns...will be turned into a most Pleasant paradise, richly Watered with the River of God”. Mather was clear that humanity participate, with its “Plough-Shares and Pruning hooks, to be employ'd for the Cultivation of the New Earth, wherein shall dwell Righteousness, and we shall see a Restored Paradise.”<sup>21</sup>

It was vital to the Puritans that, in making the earth fruitful once more, it would yield the kind of resources that would improve human life. The social concerns of the Puritans—in particular their care for the poor and needy in their newly formed communities—was their express duty. Edward Johnson, for example, made clear that God had provided in nature the means to improve human life—to feed and clothe. “The Lord...hath blest his people's provision, and satisfied her poor with bread, in a very little space, every thing in the country proved a stale-commodity, wheat, rye, pats, peas, barley, beef, pork, fish, butter, cheese,

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Edwards, ‘The Miscellanies’, reprinted in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, Volume 20, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw, p.101.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Taylor, ‘The Preface’, reprinted at *The Poetry Foundation*, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175402>, accessed 20 July, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Apocalyptic Writings”, [1723], in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, Volume 5, Ed. Stephen J. Stein, p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> Cotton Mather, *Stone Cut out of the Mountain*, 2.

timber, mast, tar.”<sup>22</sup> And thus, wrote Johnson, with God’s help, the American wilderness had recently been turned into a garden. “Thus hath the Lord been pleased to turn one of the most hideous, boundless, and unknown wildernesses in the world in an instant...to a well-ordered commonwealth, and all to serve his churches.”<sup>23</sup>

Like Johnson, Samuel Danforth also envisioned the project of making the wilderness fruitful again. He urged his listeners to glean “day by day in the fields of God’s ordinances, even among the sheaves, and gathering up handfuls, which the Lord let fall or purpose for you [Ruth 2:17], and at night going home and beating out what you had gleaned, by meditation, repetition, conference, and therewith feeding yourselves and you families.”<sup>24</sup> Using the fruits of the earth to aid the “relief of mankind’s estate”, as Francis Bacon had put it, was also central to Jonathan Edwards’ concerns. When Edwards described the “future promised advancement of the kingdom of Christ”, he made clear that with the grace of God, humanity could turn the barren earth into a fruitful garden that yielded remedies for human suffering.<sup>25</sup>

A time wherein the earth shall be abundantly fruitful...a time wherein the world shall be delivered from that multitude of sore calamities that before had prevailed (*Ezekiel 47:12*), and there shall be an universal blessing of God upon mankind, in soul and body...and “the mountains shall as it were drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk” (Joel 3:18).<sup>26</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that the Puritans’ conception of the utility of nature is considerably more complex than a mere disdain for it. For the Puritans, God’s intention was that mankind labor to make the earth fruitful once again, not so that mankind could exploit it as they pleased, but rather, so that it would render the kinds of products that would help to improve human life; to “satisfy her poor with bread”, as Edward Johnson put it. It is no coincidence that, when John Winthrop’s son, John Winthrop Jr., sent a detailed description of natural products from New England back to the Royal Society of London, so that they might be studied in detail, he was thanked for his “studious endeavours for the good of mankind”.<sup>27</sup> The Puritan belief was that the careful cultivation and study of nature was an act of servanthood; it would aid one’s neighbors in need.

### Knowledge of Nature

The second dimension of the Puritans’ understanding of humanity’s proper relationship with nature revolved around the idea of knowledge. Far from being a resource to be exploited and misused, the Puritans esteemed the creation as a source of knowledge about

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<sup>22</sup> Edward Johnson “Wonder-worjking Providence of Sions Savior in New-England” [1654], reprinted in David D.Hall, *Puritans*, p.334.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Edwards “Apocalyptic Writings”, [1723], in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, Volume 5, Ed. Stephen J. Stein, p. 338.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.337.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.340.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Samuel Hartlib to John Winthrop Jr. (1660) quoted in G.H Turnbull, “Some Correspondence of John Winthrop, Jr., and Samuel Hartlib”, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd ser., vol. 72. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society: 1957-60), p.62.

God and as an instruction book for humanity. It is not surprising that John Winthrop Jr. was the first colonial member of the British Royal Society of London, established in 1660, “for the promotion of natural knowledge.” Those Puritans who pursued the study of nature—including John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, and Jonathan Edwards among others—saw their endeavor as an integral part of their theology. The Society was founded explicitly on the Baconian vision in which natural knowledge would be used “for the relief of mankind’s estate”.

It is no surprise, therefore, that Winthrop and Mather often quoted Bacon who made explicit the role of knowledge of the natural world in the project of Christian charity. Writing about the purpose of knowledge, Bacon stated, “I humbly pray...that knowledge being now discharged of that venom which the serpent infused into it...we may not be wise above measure and sobriety, but cultivate the truth in charity.” Writing explicitly about natural knowledge—that is, knowledge of nature—Bacon continued that “the true ends of knowledge were not for pleasure of the mind, or for contention, or for superiority to others, or for profit, or fame, or power...but for the benefit and use of life; and that they perfect and govern it in charity.”<sup>28</sup> It is not difficult to see here Bacon’s effect on Jonathan Edwards’ writing about humanity’s use—and misuse—of nature.

Like Mather, Winthrop, and Edwards, John Bunyan reflected upon the way in which knowledge of nature was a source for humanity to learn about God. In particular, Bunyan’s point was about the fear of God; that man, unlike nature, did not properly fear God. Yet, Bunyan pointed out, the rest of the creation, the “inferior creatures” did indeed fear God, and so mankind had much to learn. The Psalms were Bunyan’s most important source.

The obedience of the creatures, both to God and thee. To God, they are all in subjection (set devils and men aside), even the very dragons, and all deeps, fire, hail, snow and vapours (Psa 148:7,8), fulfilling his word. Yea, the winds and seas obey him (Mark 4:41). Thus, I say, by their obedience to God they teach thee obedience, and by their obedience shall they disobedience be condemned to the judgment (Psa 147:15-18).<sup>29</sup>

There is, in Bunyan, an abiding sense of humanity’s responsibility to God, which is cast in relief by Bunyan’s comparison between humanity and the rest of the creatures.

The beast, the bird, the fish, and all, have a fear and dread of man, yea, God has put it in their hearts to fear man, and yet man is void of fear and dread, I mean of godly fear of him, that thus lovingly hath put all things under him. Sinner, art thou not ashamed, that a silly cow, a sheep, a swine, should better observe the law of his creation, than thou does the law of thy God?<sup>30</sup>

Importantly, the Puritans’ point about the importance of knowledge of nature was not just about a passive contemplation of the creation and of its Creator. Rather, the Puritans’

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<sup>28</sup> Francis Bacon, *Instauratio Magna* [1620] in Spedding and Heath, eds., *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 4, pp.20–21.

<sup>29</sup> John Bunyan, *A Treatise of the Fear of God: Showing what it is and how distinguished from that which is not so*. (London: N.Ponder, 1679). (unpag).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, unpag.

intended knowledge of nature to be an integral part of a life lived in service to God. When Robert Boyle reflected in *The Christian Virtuoso* upon the proper qualities of a Christian natural philosopher, he began by reflecting upon the practical ways in which the Godly study of nature would shape the character of its practitioner, and influence a sense of vocation. We should bear in mind that the Christian Virtuoso was the natural philosopher, that is, the precursor to today's scientist. We shall return to this in the final section. Boyle made clear that "knowledge and contemplation of the works of God, that make up the greater and lesser world, may afford divers motives to piety, and incentives to devotion."<sup>31</sup> He then went on to list "admiration", "celebration" of God's goodness, and "humility" among the qualities that would be developed with the proper study of the natural world. Indeed, Boyle continued, "the study of God's creatures may produce a trust to, or reliance and dependence on his goodness, his promises, and his ability to accomplish them both here and hereafter".<sup>32</sup>

But to what end would these qualities be put? They were an integral part of the practical project of improving humanity's condition. The entire purpose of being a naturalist, for Boyle, was to aid this humanitarian project. "I dare not think myself a true Naturalist, till my skill can make my Garden yield better Herbs and Flowers, or my Orchard better Fruit, or my Fields better Corn, or my Dairy better Cheese."<sup>33</sup>

### **Reflection: Humanity, Nature and Our Current Environmental Crisis**

In this final section, I wish to step back and reflect upon the Puritans' attitude toward nature. Rather than embodying an attitude that was dangerously contemptuous of the natural environment, desiring merely to dominate it, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Puritan tradition contains within it several strands which are not only reverent of nature, but also incorporate the study and proper respectful cultivation of the natural world into their theology of Christian service. In doing so, I want to suggest that the Puritan tradition provides two possible insights for our contemporary theological discussions about humanity's relationship with the environment.

The first insight stems from the Puritans' emphasis upon the importance of studying the natural world. We see this in the image of the Christian Virtuoso in Boyle's work, as well as in the devotion and meticulousness with which Royal Society of London members Robert Boyle, John Winthrop Jr., and Cotton Mather studied the natural world. We also observed the seriousness with which the Puritans took their studies of nature in the natural theologies of Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan. The significance of this point is that the Puritans provide us with a vision of reconciling a Christian life of duty with the vocation of natural scientist.

When viewed in the context of our contemporary world, this is poignant. It is the case today that the natural sciences are secular disciplines defined in large part by their methodological naturalism. That is, the natural sciences yield explanations about the world in terms of natural rather than supernatural causes. The discourse of the environmental sciences make no metaphysical claims and no reference to God. Of course, I am not suggesting for a moment that the natural sciences cease to be secular disciplines. My point is

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Boyle, *An Appendix to the First Part of the Christian Virtuoso* [1744] in *Works* (vol. 12), p.481.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.481.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Boyle, *Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy*, in *Works*, vol.3, p.295.

rather than the Puritans provide something of a role model for the *Christian* naturalist. It is no coincidence that the world's most prominent naturalists and conservationists—perhaps some of the most outspoken and powerful advocates for the environment—are secular figures. David Suzuki, Edward O. Wilson, Sir David Attenborough, and Tim Flannery, for example, are avowedly secular environmental activists.

I would cautiously suggest that the Puritans' image of the Christian naturalist, who studies nature as an integral part of his or her Christian duty, offers something of a role model for today's environmental scientists who are Christians but whose academic and personal personae are perhaps kept too separate. A public perception of hostility between "science" and "religion"—particularly in the United States—is sadly all too common. Christian environmental scientists must be earnestly encouraged to take a more active role in public debates since their intellectual authority as scientists accords them a special recognition when it comes to the moral imperatives for tackling climate change. Our public debates would benefit from the explicit sense that climate scientists can argue for environmental protection, not just in scientific terms, but also in terms of humanity's duty to the rest of the Creation and to God.

The second insight to be gained from the Puritans stems from the fact that their theology of nature was an integral part of their larger commitment to building the kingdom of heaven. The Puritans' overarching concern was to participate in Christ's gradual perfection of the world. This meant taking part in those endeavors that would tangibly improve human life or, as Bacon put it, provide "relief of mankind's estate". We saw, for example, Robert Boyle's insistence on using nature to yield better grain and more fertile soil to produce more food. Similarly, we observed the New England Puritans' steadfast gratitude that on one happy occasion in their lifetimes, their plot of earth in the New World had yielded enough food to feed the poor in their communities. We also observed Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan's stern warnings about how often humanity had *misused* and had exploited the Creation when in fact the proper purpose of nature was to serve man by providing for "the least of these" in the way that God had intended.

In sum, the Puritans were able to conceive of humanity's relationship to nature in terms that are both more complex, and more holistic, than the stewardship/dominion dichotomy. This is, I think, a valuable insight. It offers a vision of the Christian life in which concern for the environment is vital and integrated with the social and humanitarian aspects of Christian love. To put it another way, the Puritans' way of thinking about nature suggests to us today that environmental ethics or environmental theology need not be compartmentalized. The church need not think of duty toward the environment as a field of endeavor separate from its other responsibilities. Rather, in the Puritan tradition, using the natural world for its proper purposes is an integral part of what, in today's vocabulary, we might call the social or humanitarian aspects of Christian theology: care of the poor, the sick, the refugee, the "least of these". This understanding provides, for example, added impetus for developing projects that are at once environmentally sustainable yet also improve labor conditions and foster local indigenous agricultural enterprises in developing countries. Some such projects already exist and it is fitting that the church supports them.

## Conclusion

This article undertook an historical theology of the Anglo-American Puritan tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in an attempt to rethink the Puritans' oft-maligned attitude toward nature. I recovered a strand of the Puritan tradition in which, far from desiring to conquer and dominate nature, the Puritans conceived of humanity's responsibility toward nature in terms of human sin and eschatology. In this tradition, it was man's task to use nature for its appropriate ends, but this was not an act of exploitation. On the contrary, the Puritans cautioned about the sinful misuse of nature and instead sought out the fruits of nature such that they might be used to improve human life. In this way, the Puritans believed they were participating in Christ's gradual perfection of the earth.

It is with both an abiding sense of responsibility and concern that many Christians look upon the earth's current ecological situation. The final section of this article moved to the present and addressed the contemporary theological discussions about the environment, drawing two insights from the Puritans' understanding of our relationship with nature. The first concerned the public role of the Christian environmentalist, and the second point stemmed from the Puritans' ability to conceive of humanity's relationship with nature in a more holistic fashion than simply in terms of dominion and stewardship. To move beyond the fairly narrow conceptual dichotomy of dominion and stewardship would strengthen the church's ability to conceive of the environment not merely as one arm of their concern, but rather, at the heart of the Christian life of service.





## THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PSALM OF LAMENT

Fr. Gabriel Mendy\*

Authentic faith is faith in God that believes, hopes, and trusts in God's goodness and love in all circumstances even when God remains silent or when there is no evident reason to believe and trust in God. Both in joy and sorrow, authentic faith always relies on God's love as it patiently waits for God to reveal his will to the individual. A person with such faith is disposed to whatever God designs in his own wisdom and freedom. For this kind of faith is not based wholly and solely on what the individual expects from God. The same is true for a theologian or believer with an authentic faith. One would not express or hold absolute statements about God which categorize, define, and limit God within certain frontiers. This open-minded approach towards God that is informed by one's authentic faith is evident in the Psalms. In most of the Psalms, God is conceptualized in anthropomorphic terms as a God who hears, who is moved to pity and compassion, and relents. The psalmists, therefore, prayed with the hope that their prayer would be heard and answered by God. However, their faith was not completely based on the fact that their prayers and laments were always going to generate a response from God because they were fully aware that God did not always respond immediately to their cry of lament. They had to continuously pray to God in their everyday lives without losing faith.

From the internal transition within the psalm of lament that begins with an address followed by lament, petition, vow, and finally praise, Claus Westermann would argue that the structure of the psalm of lament is theologically significant.<sup>1</sup> For him, the structure of the psalm sheds light on the faith of the psalmist because it clearly shows that God only hears or responds to the needs of his people when they cry out to him in lament. In this essay, I will disagree with Westermann's position for the psalms of lament do not always follow this internal transition. Secondly, the kind of faith-relationship that Westermann depicts between God and his people is not a complete reflection of the psalms of lament and the human experience of God. This article will, therefore, examine the structure of the psalms of lament and address the theological implications of Westermann's claims on the theological significance of the transition within the psalms of lament. Contrary to Westermann, I will maintain that the psalms that end in pure lamentation are actually testimonies of faith in God's deliverance as a gift. Hopefully, my perspective will correct misperceptions about lament which is generally considered as a sign or mark of desperation and unbelief.

### The Structure of the Psalm of Lament

The individual and communal psalms of lament are generally different from other psalms precisely in content, mood, and structure. Their content includes the bitter experience of sickness, death, disappointment, and defeat that the psalmist expresses or articulates in words before God. For some biblical scholars, it is precisely the content of these psalms that essentially distinguishes them as prayers of disorientation. Their structure is, accordingly, a secondary feature of their genre within the Psalter. Other biblical scholars like Westermann would maintain that the structure of the psalm of lament is more important because it is the

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<sup>1</sup> Claus Westermann, "The Role Of The Lament In The Old Testament," In *Interpretation: A Journal Of Bible And Theology*, Vol.18, (Jan., 1974), 26.

most unique feature of the psalm of lament that basically makes the lament meaningful. For him, the structure is not just unique in the way it unfolds from lament to praise; it is also fixed with specific elements. Some of these elements include “invocation, plea to God for help, complaint, confession of sin or an assertion of innocence, curse of enemies or imprecation, confidence of God’s response, hymn or blessing.”<sup>2</sup> Among these elements, the most important and regular units he believes are basic to any psalm of lament are: I. Address or an introductory petition II. Lament, III. Confession of trust, IV. Petition, and VI. Vow of praise.

These features are quite evident, for instance, in Psalms 5 and 6 where the psalmist addresses God, presents his lament, petition, and affirms his trust in God. In both psalms, the psalmist finally ends in praising God for answering his prayers. In addition to Psalms 5 and 6, the other psalms of lament also exhibit within these elements the internal transition from lament to praise even in the laments recorded in the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and the Prophets. They seemingly follow this pattern because lament simply functions as supplication after which one praises God for answering one’s prayers. Westermann would, therefore, maintain that...

...the psalms of lament...are poems and songs alike and have a fixed structure, one that obviously permitted an unlimited number of varieties. Nevertheless, in each one of these psalms we can discern a fixed sequence of elements which marks it as a psalm of lament. The structure of the psalm of lament is address, lamentation, a turning to God, petition, vow of praise...There is not a single psalm of lament that stops in lamentation. Lamentation has no meaning in and of itself. That it functions as an appeal is evident in the structure [because] what the lament is concerned with is not a description of one’s own sufferings or with self pity, but with the removal of the suffering itself.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the psalms indeed exhibit an internal transition within the structure because in most cases the psalmist ends up praising God or vows to praise God for hearing his prayer. However, the abrupt and sudden change of mood from lament to praise is what has compelled biblical scholars to provide other possible explanations of what is not just a theological interest but a literary concern as well.

Both Gunkel and Begrich have suggested two related explanations of this radical change in mood. At least for Begrich,

...the life-setting of the psalms of lament would have been the sanctuary; the lament would have been answered by an authorized cultic speaker, either a priest or a prophet with the assurance to the worshipper in the form of an oracle. Unfortunately,

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<sup>2</sup> Temper Longman, “Lament,” In *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide To Interpreting The Literary Genes Of The Old Testament*, edited by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese Jr., (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 199-200.

<sup>3</sup> Claus Westermann, “The Role Of The Lament In The Old Testament,” In *Interpretation: A Journal Of Bible And Theology*, Vol.18, (Jan., 1974), 26.

the Psalter does not contain any direct version of such an oracle because it is not part of the lament.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of Gunkel who is not completely convinced about the above explanation of a priest or prophet pronouncing an oracle of salvation, he believes that,

...a real change must have taken place in the one speaking. It is not, therefore, the fact of the oracle, as such, that created this special type of psalms of petition but the word which in these oracles come from God to the one petitioning and lamenting. There is much evidence of this in the psalms themselves...This word changes the one speaking. The one who speaks now has been transformed by God having heard his supplication.<sup>5</sup>

Westermann was probably informed or influenced by Gunkel's explanation. Other scholars like John W. Wevers would also attribute or ascribe the transition from lament to praise to the power of Yahweh's name that the psalmist invoked in his distress.

These explanations seem to be reasonable and plausible. However, we should understand that the psalms in general are not in their original forms as they appear in the Book of Psalms. They were adapted for many purposes and settings in life and the redactor's own aims and ideas can also be detected in their final forms. Even the Book of Psalms as a whole was rearranged and organized in its final shape with the psalms of lament mostly featuring in the first, second, and third books and the psalms of praise in books four and five of the Book of Psalms. Given this fact, it is very possible that the redactor reworked the psalms of lament themselves to ensure that most of them equally ended in praise instead of lament following the general ending of the Book of Psalms. The conclusion of the psalms of lament in praise was designed then to represent or reflect the spirit of praise that generally characterizes all forms of prayer and worship.

My main interest, in this regard, is not simply to consider the internal transition within the structure of the psalms of lament. Rather, it is to address Westermann's claim that the internal transition from lament to praise is something theologically significant. First of all, the internal transition is not necessarily evident in all the psalms of lament. For, "there are no fixed conclusion of the lament...It is highly likely that the laments with thanksgiving conclusion were written soon after the prayer had been heard, when the psalmist's feelings were still alive with bitter experience."<sup>6</sup> Secondly, there is nothing fixed about the structure of the psalm of lament itself as scholars like Gillingham would admit. She clearly does not agree with Westermann because "the structure exists to be changed in innumerable ways; even the supposedly concluding vow can occur in the middle of the psalm (Ps. 44:8). The lament is recognizable because it contains some of the elements in any sort of sequence."<sup>7</sup> In

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<sup>4</sup> Klaus Koch, *The Growth Of The Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method*, (Aberdeen, Great Britain: The University Of Aberdeen Press, 1967), 175.

<sup>5</sup> Claus Westermann, *The Praise Of God In The Psalms*, translated by Keith R. Crim, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965), 69-70.

<sup>6</sup> Leopold Sabourin, S.J., *The Psalms: Their Origin And Meaning*, (New York: The Society Of St. Paul Press, 1969), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Gillingham, *The Poems And Psalms Of The Hebrew Bible*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 215.

fact, she cited different psalms of lament, for instance, Ps. 12, 36, 59, 86 and 120 which end with a description of distress. She therefore, concluded that “not one psalm follows the same structure as another and Ps. 39 and 88 have no recognizable form whatsoever...their designation as lament is entirely due to their content and mood.”<sup>8</sup> This clearly supports my point of view because these psalms end in pure lamentation with no resolution of the problems and concerns raised before God. In spite of this, the psalms of lament are still theologically significant both in their form and conclusion as the other psalms that end in praise are relevant.

### **The Theological Significance of the Structure**

In Westermann’s perspective, it is the way the psalm of lament is structured and how the psalmist moves from lament to praise that is theologically significant. Precisely, because these two features ultimately indicate that God always answers and acts on behalf of his people whenever they cry out to him. This is apparently how the Israelites experienced God and his saving power since their liberation from slavery in Egypt. For, it was only after the Israelites cried out to God in Ex. 3:7-8 that God heard their cry for help and promised to liberate them from the house of slavery. Westermann would, therefore, insist that “the significance of lament in the Old Testament is apparent in the way the Pentateuchal narrative opens the Book of Exodus with a cry of distress over the oppression in Egypt...The cry out of deep anguish accompanies Israel through every age of her history.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, Israel had to cry out to God throughout her history before God could act on her behalf.

The cry of Israel, in that sense, is what moves or compels God to act according to her needs. If that is the case, it means that the cry of Israel is in itself theologically significant in determining and understanding God’s response. For,

...whenever we want to explain precisely what happened when Yahweh delivered Israel from Egypt, for instance, we have to speak of the cry of distress, uttered by those oppressed in the house of bondage...We can say that a position of significance is thereby conferred implicitly upon the cry of distress, for it too belongs to the events of the deliverance.<sup>10</sup>

The lament is, in that regard, an essential and inevitable part of what happens between God and the people God has chosen for his own as illustrated in Judg. 5:7-9; 10:11-12; 1Sam. 7:8-9, and 1Kings 17:20-22. The implication of this idea is that without the Israelites’ lament, it means that they cannot equally be assisted or delivered by God from all their troubles and difficulties. Their lament was, in that case, an indispensable aspect of their relationship with God. Even, “when it came to the psalms, this same sequence is represented by numerous petitions that began with a narrative of the psalmist distress, a narration that follows into a request of relief.”<sup>11</sup> The psalmist invariably praised God at the end of the lament after crying out to God in distress because, in Westermann’s view, it is impossible for God to hear without responding to the psalmist’s prayer for help.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>9</sup> Claus Westermann, “The Role of Lament in the Old Testament,” In *Interpretation*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>11</sup> James Kugel, L., “Topics In The History Of The Spirituality Of The Psalms,” In *Jewish Spirituality: From The Bible Through The Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Greens, (P.122

If the above analysis of Westermann's thesis is accurate, it is the Israelite's understanding of God that should be examined more than what God represents or does in response to their lament. What comes to light more in all this is the way the Israelites perceived and approached God instead of who God really is in his own right. They merely assumed that "it is not thinkable that God would hear and then not act. And therefore the crucial thing is Yahweh's hearing, from which everything else happily will follow."<sup>12</sup> Their lament automatically ends in praise, as well, because God is a God who never fails to attend to the cries and needs of those lamenting their situation. From this hypothesis of Westermann on the theological significance of the structure of the psalm of lament, it follows that there is always a high expectation and perhaps an obligation on God's part to respond to his people's plea. Whether it is a cry of oppression, injustice or pain; whether it is a vengeful or vindictive cry against the enemy who is rarely identified in the psalms; whether it is the cry of the poor, isolated outcast, or the cry of the king or prophet, God is bound to act in their favor. But what should be considered in all this is that "the transition in the structure of the lament is rooted in the lament's function as an appeal...understood in this way, the structure of the psalm of lament is one of the most important powerful witness in the experience of God's activity in the Old Testament."<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, there is a theological problem with Westermann's model of interpreting the theological significance of the structure of the psalms of lament if God's response depends on the lament of the Israelites. To some extent, he provided an insightful understanding of the function of lament in noting that,

...the theological significance of the personal lament lies first of all in the fact that it gives voice to suffering. The lament is the language of suffering, in it suffering is given the dignity of language. It will not stay silent...it is the means by which suffering comes before the one who can take it away.<sup>14</sup>

Other biblical scholars like Bruggemann tend to agree with Westermann in recognizing the theological significance of the structure of the psalms of lament. However, their views are difficult to justify theologically because the psalmist or individual person becomes the one who takes the initiative to question God and demand an answer from God. God is not, in that case, the prime initiator of the dialogue or relationship. Rather, God is the one who is first challenged by the psalmist to justify himself, be true to his name, and not allow his enemies to rejoice over him. This form of prayer and mind-set seems to be plausible, for Bruggemann, because it...

...shifts the calculus and redresses the distribution of power between the two parties, so that the petitionary party is taken seriously and the God who is addressed is newly engaged in the crisis, in a way that puts God at risk...The basis for the conclusion that the petitioner is taken seriously and legitimately granted power in the relation is that the speech of the petitioner is heard, valued, transmitted as serious speech...The

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<sup>12</sup> Walter Bruggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Claus Westermann, "The Role of Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament," In *Interpretation*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

lament form thus concerns a redistribution of power [if] the speech forms that redress power distribution have been silenced and eliminated, theological monopoly is reinforced, docility and submissiveness are engendered.<sup>15</sup>

While I recognize the fact that lament should passionately be addressed to God, our interpretation of the significance or meaning of lament should not mislead us to assert theological conclusions that are fundamentally distorted and questionable. One cannot conclude that submissiveness and docility in prayer is an undesirable sign of faith in God.

### **The Theological Implications of Westermann's Position**

The Old Testament documented many instances or occasions when Israel cried out to God and God heard their cry and acted on their behalf. Throughout her entire history, Israel was constantly crying out to God out of distress in a manner that typifies Israel's relationship with God. However, it is theologically unjustifiable for anyone to abstract or deduce from Israel's persistent cry of distress a notion of God that almost defines or understands God solely on the basis of his instant response to the lament of his people. For, there are occasions and instances in the Old Testament that argue against Westermann's position. There were occasions when the Israelites or the psalmist in particular cried out to God in distress and God either punished, remained silent, or failed to respond immediately to the crisis at hand. For instance, in Ex. 5:22, Moses questioned the Lord for increasing the evil suffered by the people. In other words, God did not instantly respond in their favor. Similarly, in Num. 20:22 God punished Moses for his unbelief when the people cried out in desperation for water. Even in Joshua 7:7-26, the Israelites were punished for their sins in spite of Joshua's plea for assistance.

Therefore, it is not the case that God was always responding positively and decisively to his people whenever they cried out to him in distress. If God positively responded to their cry whenever they presented their petition to him, as Westermann claims, it was purely out of love and compassion or for the glory of his holy name but not because of their cry of distress. What we can accurately say, in this regard, is that on some special occasions, God responded to his people's lament but there were other instances when God also remained silent leaving the psalmist with an unresolved problem at hand. This is clearly evident in Psalms 39, 44, 74, 77, and 88 where the psalmist earnestly pleaded in vain with God without receiving the 'salvation oracle' or the effective word of God. In my own view, their prayers in these psalms were still heard by God even when God did not immediately attend to their urgent complaints. The reason for God's unpredictable response is precisely because God is a mystery who is not conditioned, bound, and obliged by the lament of his people.

The way Westermann understood the ending of the psalms of lament in praise as evidence or proof that God always responds to his people's lament is clearly misleading. For his conclusion does not only limit God's freedom to act when and where he chooses, it also raises questions about God's omniscience or capacity to come to the help of his people before they even cry out to God. For this reason, I consider his opinion to be too simplistic because it is a one-sided view of the relationship between God and his people. In fact, it does not fully reflect the way Christians or believers relate to God even in times of trial and

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, edited by Patrick D. Miller, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 101-102.

danger. Rather, it suggests that the psalmist is the one who takes the initiative and moves God to action; that the Christian or believer is the one who out of his or her own self-consciousness motivates or propels God to respond to the person's predicament. Both the psalmist and Christian believer end up deserving or earning the action taken by God as a result of their lament. Without their personal plea or intervention, it means that God cannot act in their favor which is impossible to sustain.

The implications of this type of relationship that Westermann portrays is equally very difficult to explain or maintain in light of what we know about grace and God's unconditional love because there is nothing we deserve or merit from God. God's grace and favors are absolutely gifts that are given not on demand but out of love. Since grace is uncreated, human initiative has nothing to do with all the favors we experienced without even knowing or asking for such blessings in the first place. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to presume or claim "the one who prays holds the initiative and God is the faithful respondent."<sup>16</sup> In any given relationship, the initiative is always from God whether in prayer of lament or in worship because the Christian believer only acts or prays in response to God's invitation and love that the individual personally experienced.

Contrary to Westermann, I would argue that it is in order to test the psalmist's or Christian's level of faith and endurance that God allows them to cry out to him before acting in their favor. As a God who already knows the conditions of his people, God does not need to be reminded or compelled to respond to their needs right away. The lament is, therefore, meant to benefit the psalmist because it does not bear any effects on God's own being. For God is not changed or constrained by what the psalmist does or believes. This does not necessarily mean that the Christian believer should not either pray or lament before God in the context of worship. Nor does it mean that it is pointless questioning God when one is inflicted with pain, distress, and disaster if God remains silent. What it, rather, means is that the Christian should express his lament in hope while respecting God's freedom, transcendence, and ineffable nature. As long as the Christian believer bears a sense of mystery about God and his faith is not result-oriented, then,

...at the very least the sufferer will return to the place of worship with the sense that he or she is free to be present with every pain, loss, doubt, hope and dream...While we cannot always remove pain and misery, nor answer the deepest questions about suffering, we can worship [because] worship gives us a way to look at the world. Worship gives us a place to bring our disquiet over suffering.<sup>17</sup>

If our lament is spiritually motivated, it should also be rooted and guided by our faith in God whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8).

### **Psalms of Lament As Testimonies of Faith**

From my own perspective, the psalmist who ends his lament with confidence and vows to praise God for hearing his prayer is not more faithful and positive about God any more than the psalmist who ends his lament in pure lamentation without any foreseen solution to

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, 148.

<sup>17</sup> David Pleins, *The Psalms: Songs Of Praise, Tragedy, Hope And Justice*, (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books Press, 1993), 29-30.

his problem. For one to suggest that the act of praise at the end of the psalm of lament is the mark or proof of the psalmist's faith in God, as Westermann tends to claim, is tantamount to questioning the faith of the psalmist who ends in pure lamentation without praising God. One should not just consider the act of praise used at the end of the lament as the only sign or mark of the psalmist's faith in God. What should also be considered is the totality of both the language and mode of expression that the psalmist used throughout the prayer. In addition to this, the inner disposition of the psalmist should be noted, in order to, determine the authenticity and intensity of his act of faith. The ones who sincerely and honestly expressed their desperation before God without praising him in the end; who even questioned God's concern and responsibility are no less believers in God than the ones God answered their prayers and they praised God in return. There is clearly no reason whatsoever for anyone to believe or suggest that pure lamentation is a sign or an...

...act of unfaith for what is said to Yahweh may be scandalous and without redeeming social value, but these speakers are completely committed and whatever must be said about the human situation must be said directly to Yahweh, who is the Lord of the human experience and partner with us in it. That does not mean things are to be toned down.<sup>18</sup>

If one must evaluate or determine the faith of the person lamenting in the psalm, it should be the complaint of the psalmist itself that should be considered than the psalmist's act of praise. For, "the complaint is the focal point in the lament [from which] we learn what motivated the lamenter to prayer."<sup>19</sup> Although Ps. 39 ends in a dark somber note with the psalmist calling on God to look away from him so that the psalmist would know gladness, before he departs and be no more (Ps. 39:13), the psalmist did not lose faith in God after a series of complaints he already made to God. This is true because at the very heart of his complaint in verse 9, he surrendered himself to God with a moving submission that he would be silent and no longer open his mouth again. He realized at that point that it was God who basically permitted what he was experiencing in his life. This shows that "the psalmist like Job recognizes that God's hand is behind everything."<sup>20</sup>

In Ps. 44, there is also evidence to show that the community that was lamenting was suffering precisely because it was faithful and true to the covenant. They were ridiculed by their enemies on account of their faithfulness and that was the more reason why they voiced out their displeasure without losing faith in God's covenant. The community even confessed in verses 20-21 that "if they had forgotten the name of their God, or spread forth their hands to a strange god, God himself would have discovered it because he knows the secrets of the heart." They were absolutely faithful but they still complained to God without losing hope in him. Their complaint to God, in that sense, is nothing but a testimony or an affirmation of their faith. Even, if "none of the questions are answered, yet to vent them shows that the people have not given up on God."<sup>21</sup> The fact that it was only in God's own

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<sup>18</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message Of The Psalms*, 153.

<sup>19</sup> Temper Longman, "Lament," In *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, 200.

<sup>20</sup> Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms: Studies In Hebrew Narrative And Poetry*, edited by David W. Cotter, O.S.B, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 97.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.



presence and nowhere else that they vented or voiced their complaint is in itself an indication that they still had faith in God.

The psalmist would openly question God's compassion and love in Ps. 77:8-10— Whether God forgot to be gracious or whether God's right hand has changed. However, the questions he raised did not amount to a lack of faith because it was precisely on the day of his troubles that the psalmist said he sought the Lord and stretched out his hands in prayer at night without ceasing (Ps. 77:2). In fact, his questions rather led him to fully remember or recall what the Lord did in the past for his people (Ps. 77:11-20). He was, therefore, encouraged to renew his faith and hope in God. Interestingly, the very last words of Jesus on the cross, that is, "My God My God why have you abandoned me," were the words of the psalmist in Ps. 22:1. These are words of pure lament by one who lived in total obedience to God so they are not a mark of desperation and total loss of faith in God. Rather, they represent a clear and solid testimony of faith in God. The one who laments and complains in prayer should not necessarily be deemed unworthy of God because...

...even a prophet of God can complain about his suffering...The psalmist realizes his utter helplessness and his complete dependence on God...in the face of trials and so he gives full rein to his lament as the expression of his belief that no human aid can avail him anything...If we raise the question of our duty to suffer without complaining with patience and even with joy, as proof that these laments are unchristian we are simply confusing the issue.<sup>22</sup>

### **Psalm 88—A True Reflection of Human Experience**

An interesting distinction between lament of affliction and lament of the dead was provided by Westermann. These forms of lament are distinct, in his view, because lament of affliction is forward looking while lament of the dead looks backward. The lament of affliction more than lament of the dead would, in that sense, be more theologically significant for him because it is future-oriented towards God. This distinction is seemingly accurate. However, it is my conviction that in both lament of affliction and lament of the dead, those lamenting are in fact orienting themselves, their thoughts, and prayers to God. In both cases, God is their ultimate source of hope that they expect to make a difference in their situation in life. There is always a turn towards God in either lament of affliction or lament of the dead that is very typical or characteristic of our human experience. God is always addressed or questioned whenever we are afflicted or bereaved and even though we want to see signs from God, we do not always expect an immediate, sudden, and decisive intervention by God. Precisely, because we know that God is not at our command or beck and call. We consequently, continue to hope and search for meaning in God's incomprehensible and mysterious ways. This approach reflects the common human experience of those who totally and completely depend on God's deliverance and unconditional forgiveness as a gift. The feeling of utter dependence on God that we experience, especially, in times of trial and desperation is what is dramatically and vividly displayed and reflected in Ps. 88. This particular psalm does not...

...carry any articulated resolve of the issue [because] it leaves us lingering in the unresolved, dangling in the depth of the pit without any explicit sign of rescue...[but]

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<sup>22</sup> T. Warden, *The Psalms Are Christian Prayers*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 47.

faith does not always resolve life...in so far as this psalm is a witness of faith, it attests that faith means staying in the midst of the disorientation, not retreating to an old orientation that is over and done with.<sup>23</sup>

For this reason, I will examine Ps. 88 in detail, in order to, support my convictions that the psalms of lament are testimonies of faith. This will enable us to realize the truth about lament in human experience. At the same time, it will shed light on how faith is at work in all forms of lament. The reason I selected Ps. 88 is because it does not only represent our basic human experience, it also stands out as “the primary example of unanswered prayer in the Psalter [with] no hint of answer, response, or resolution from God.”<sup>24</sup> In the first place, it is noteworthy that the psalm does not have all the five elements of the structure of the psalm of lament that Westermann identified. In fact, it is composed almost entirely of complaint which dominates the entire psalm except for the petition that is limited to just verse 2. Secondly, the complaint which almost forms the entire psalm is structured or divided into three movements, namely, a call for help with the description of affliction and social isolation (v.1-8), a series of questions (v.10-12), and a final call that speaks of darkness as his companion (v.13-18). In all of these units, the psalmist maintains that he cried out to God for help at night and even in the morning. Interestingly, he used “three different Hebrew words for cry as if to indicate that the psalmist has exhausted every approach...the result was ‘darkness’ which is literally the final word of the Psalm.”<sup>25</sup>

From the content and mood of the psalm, we can say that the psalmist was probably wrestling with life and death issues or was at the verge of death. The reason is because he constantly mentioned Sheol, pit, grave, the dead, darkness, etc. in order to depict his situation and heighten or intensify his expectation of God’s help. Yet, the psalmist’s faith was unquestionable. Even when he went as far as putting the blame of his troubles and isolation wholly and solely on God in v.8 and v.18—that God is the cause of his companions, lover, and friends abandoning him—he still had faith in God. The question of whether God is to blame for the evils experienced in this world is quite a common theme of interest and concern. It is critically but justifiably raised and addressed in theodicy. Therefore, questioning the cause and reality of pain and suffering does not necessarily amount to a denial of faith in God. In this case, the psalmist felt that God was the cause of his troubles. But it is likewise evident to him that “God is also the solution. The psalmist’s prayer itself is evidence that he or she is convinced that even life’s worst moments somehow have to do with God. So the psalmist’s cries continue to rise out of the depths.”<sup>26</sup> If God was not the solution, the psalmist would never have bothered to voice out his concerns and sentiments before God.

When God, therefore, chooses to remain silent towards the psalmist, his silence should not be underestimated. Rather, it should be appreciated because “the unanswered plea does not silence the psalmist. Perhaps the psalmist is in fact speaking to the empty sky...[but] the

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<sup>23</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message Of The Psalms*, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms And The Life Of Faith*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> J-Clinton McCann Jr., “Psalms,” In *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary In Twelve Volumes, Vol. IV*, edited by Leander E. Keck and Thomas C. Long, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 1027.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1029.

failure of God to respond does not lead to atheism or doubt in God. It leads to more intense address.”<sup>27</sup> Although Ps. 88 ends on a very somber note rather than a note of praise, I consider this particular psalm to be a true reflection of the human experience of lament and prayer in moments of utter desperation. For that reason, it deserves to be part of the Psalter with all the difficulties it poses because it shows that “life is like this and this psalm intends to speak of all life, not just the good parts...that [lament] is still speech. It is addressed...to God, even in God’s unresponsive absence.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The psalms of lament are central to the Book of Psalms and they form the greater number of the collection of psalms. In spite of this, they are hardly valued as testimonies of faith or treasures of faith that represent the confidence and trust the Israelites had in God. In considering the structure of the psalm of lament, its mood and content, it is absolutely clear that the psalms of lament are never a betrayal of faith. For that reason, we should not be slow, ashamed, or afraid to voice out in prayer our own bitterness and lament before God as long as we are ready and willing like the psalmist to remain faithful even in the face of God’s silence and seeming indifference. God is indeed a mystery and will always remain a mystery beyond our comprehension and imagination. We are not, therefore, expected to command him or anticipate his response. Nor can we determine the possibilities that are open to God when we pray to him in distress. Like the psalmist, our faith in God simply requires us to hope in him and accept his intervention and deliverance as a pure gift we are not entitled to receive in times of crisis.

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<sup>27</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Message Of The Psalms*, 79.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



## REVIEW ARTICLES

### Diana Garland and Family Ministry

Steve Clark

Writing a review article that justly captures the essence of a book this comprehensive is a comprehensive task in and of itself, especially when Diana Garland's effort in this second edition is a first-rate undertaking.<sup>1</sup> Some initial comments will help to set the tone of Garland's book. First, a recurrent reminder throughout *Family Ministry* is that family ministry is a "perspective we take on how we live congregational life together; it is not just a program or even a set of programs designed with families as the objective of our focus" (449). Secondly, the following ethos permeates the book:

Our goal is Christian discipleship, so that the world looking at our life together as a congregation *and* as families recognizes us as Jesus followers because of how we love one another (Jn 13:34-35) not only in our times of joy but in our times of anger and conflict. (369)

With these programmatic statements in mind, Garland takes a three-pronged approach: (1) developing families grounded in Christian faith; (2) helping families live the teachings of Jesus with one another; and (3) equipping and supporting families as they learn to serve others. These three prongs lead the reader from understanding Christian family heritage in Sections 1 and 2 (historically, currently, in Christian thought, biblically, etc.), to helping families live the teachings of Jesus or the process of family life in Sections 3 (various relationships that make up families, developmental issues, etc.), and finally to the how-to's of congregational life as family ministry in Section 4 (knowing one's congregation and neighborhood as well as practical advice). As theory precedes praxis, Garland adeptly sets up the whats and whys family ministry.

#### Developing Families Grounded in Christian Faith

In Prong 1, Section 1, the context of family is probed. Garland looks both within and outside the church in order to paint the historical landscape of the notion of nuclear family (as opposed to kinship, clans, extended family structures, etc.), along the way discussing the nuclear family concept, fathers or mothers working outside the home, divorce, the role of adoption, the family as consumer rather than producer, etc. Garland suggests that the structure of the "traditional family"—breadwinning father and homemaker mother and their dependent children—has not been a historical reality for more than 5% of the history of Christianity" (40). The upshot of this is that the practical application of scripture and programs within the church need to be clear of imposed cultural expectations. For example, adoption was a significant and meaningful means of family historically and hence is widely used in scripture to describe our relationship to God. Accordingly adoption is a worthy practice that today's local churches should incorporate into their congregational life; the lonely, the alone, or those who need help learning family living skills, are some of the many who should be adopted into the family of God (129). Finally, one of numerous helpful

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<sup>1</sup> *Family Ministries: A Comprehensive Guide* (2nd Ed). By Diana R. Garland. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012, 656 pp., \$50.00 retail.

points Garland offers is his suggestion that as leaders implement programs or interact with others, they be cognizant of two things. First, “spelling out what is ideal and ‘best’ has the potential for oppressing those who are not able to achieve that ideal, or who feel called to walk a different path” (87). Second, any teaching “about what is ideal should be firmly grounded in grace and love and inclusion for all those who might otherwise inadvertently be drawn out of the circle of concern” (88).

Prong 1 concludes with a discussion in Section 2 regarding family formation dynamics—development (e.g. parents to grandparents, married and unmarried, divorced parents, etc.), family attachment, loss, stresses, and culture and family identity to name but a few. Notable discussions in Chapter 8 (“Families in Physical and Social Space”) pertain to the *ecosystem approach* to understanding families. That is, while there are universal similarities among families, there are differences among families as well, many of which we cannot fully comprehend nor understand without considering the social environment that influences the families in question. Community, and particularly its demise, is a large factor in this understanding. Stresses that affect families are discussed at length as well. One insight of particular note is the distinction that stress can be debilitating (distress) or strengthening (eustress) within families (259). Having a choice in stressful matters, or even intentionally taking on stressful situations (e.g. more work hours), can be strengthening when a choice has been made with familial agreement. It is the imposed, unalterable stresses that wreak havoc on families in addition to the chronic stresses of everyday life (260-1).

### **Helping Families Live the Teachings of Jesus**

Prong 2, Section 3, addresses some issues needed in helping families live out the teachings of Jesus. Initially, Garland notes various dynamics here such as power and roles in families particularly the use of power to serve rather than self-exalt. Additionally, Garland addresses a sampling of key biblical texts and research pertaining to divorce, remarriage, family violence, sexual abuse of children, etc. For example, within a very deft discussion of power and familial roles with respect to discipline, Garland suggests parents consider taking examples from Christ, being more gracious in dealing with undesirable behavior when they discipline their children (392-400). Among several outcomes noted, effective discipline teaches faith: Jesus anticipated Peter’s sin of denial (Mt 26:75) and responded with grace; Jesus personalized the sin of others in that Peter hurt Jesus and needed to see the effects followed by an opportunity to guide; Jesus healed the hurt by showing trust in Peter and inviting him into a trusting position (Jn 21:15-19).

Lastly, Garland emphasizes that an appropriate way to live the life Jesus taught is by working together to emulate the things Jesus did. In short, James 2:17 (NASB) says, “Faith, if it has no works is dead.” Garland reminds us that what we truly believe (accept as real) and see as important (what we value) shapes our behavior ultimately. Accordingly, service and a larger purpose as a family unit are discussed. For example, “inside-out” families and congregations encourage everyone (intergenerationally) to be engaged in service outside the church community with *breathing* being the minimum qualification for serving (428). And given our relational nature, the most engaging serving opportunities allow families to serve alongside one another (428).

## Equipping and Supporting Families

In Prong 3, Section 4, Garland underscores that congregational life is the gathering for worship together. Even though we can worship alone, anywhere, we were also created to be a gathering people. “Our segregated performance-oriented worship leads to a loss of focus on the worship of God as the gathering of the whole body of believers” (451). Why? Our focus needs to be how the congregation worships, not how well the leaders performed. Leaders are coaches, not the players. Too often in churches, those who cannot participate without distracting, are provided concurrent services or programs in a different space. Hence, performance-oriented worship divides the body (451).

An important insight here, reflecting the tone of the book, suggests that some churches attempt to meld congregational intergenerationality with “ecclesiastic happy meals” (children’s worship kits) after children have been invited to the front for a pastor to give a brief lesson somehow related to the sermon (452). The pastor then attempts to speak meaningfully to children of diverse ages on display as if entertaining the congregation while adults murmur or laugh at the children’s responses or antics all the while encouraging them to avoid being laughed at or be comedians. In short, the children’s sermon teaches the children that “the adult sermon is not for them, and so they do not learn to listen” (453). Yet, as with the rest of the book, Garland does not simply highlight a problem but also offers practical solutions. Here, Garland suggests that preachers speak to everyone in the “real” sermon. Children will not understand everything, but neither do adults, nor do children understand much of what adults say in everyday life. Moreover, adults can learn from occasional messages geared toward children (454). In short, one might say there is no need for ecclesiastic happy meals when a full banquet can be served to everyone. In fact, having this “real” sermon provides parents the opportunity to field questions from their children and engage in conversation.

Concluding the book is some perspicacious counsel on moving from assessment to implementing change within the church community. Knowing one’s congregation and the neighborhood empowers the congregation to care in new ways (522). And planning and evaluating family ministry post assessment is critical especially because church change can be rather slow, causing some to perceive the assessment as a waste of time. In actuality, Garland illuminates this dilemma noting that the slowness is perceived only by those who think churches should move more quickly, when in reality the relational nature of churches naturally slows things down. This is a good thing. People’s lives and relationships are at stake, so care in implementation of assessed changes is prudent.

### Some Commentary on *Family Ministry*

Among numerous compliments due Garland’s work, the advice sprinkled throughout is tremendously practical. For example, Garland suggests ways to help shape children’s personhood, their gifts, etc., rather than labeling them by behavior (e.g. We shouldn’t say you are lazy but that is lazy behavior, 399). Additionally the chapters on “Congregational Life as Family Ministry and Working Together” exemplify excellent, practical insights. In “Congregational Life as Family” Garland hits on what is possibly one of the key juggling acts in most churches, large and small alike: integrating children (or others marginalized due to their being distracting or difficult to accommodate) into the mainstream worship. As discussed above, Garland clearly makes the case that production or entertainment oriented

churches only divide the congregation. This alone is reason to pause. Recently, I was in a church service when the most appropriate little cry from a young child served to affirm a theological truth. During corporate prayer, as the pastor was thanking God for His mercies, the child blurted out several times “Dadda.” This was not a distraction but a confirmation. An excerpt from the relevant chapter speaks for itself:

Before the baptisms began, the choir left the loft in front of the baptistery and sat in front pew reserved for them. The pastor then invited the children to come up to stand in the loft so they could see “up close” what was happening. Their rapt attention as they watched several of their friends being baptized pulled adults in the congregation into the wonder of this event. The congregation participated through and with the children standing in the choir loft. As persons came down the stairs into the water, the congregation sang a capella, “Wade in the water, children.” What could have been a “performance” of baptism was instead a shared community activity of wonder, song and worship. (452)

However, notwithstanding Garland’s numerous insights and comprehensive treatment, some statements of the text are problematic. First, Garland states that children cannot think symbolically (453). Many researchers have reached different conclusions which affect how we engage with children in their spiritual formation: namely, children can think symbolically as well as at a deeper spiritual level more than they are given credit for.<sup>2</sup> J. Barrett and R. Richert, in a study involving American Protestant children aged three to six, found that children appear capable of reasoning about multiple divine properties that differ from human properties and knowing the difference between human and divine qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence, and infallibility. Children deal with spiritual issues at a far more complex level than adults think and *preparedness*, not anthropomorphism, is at the center of this.<sup>3</sup> That is, children may be cognitively equipped or prepared to understand some properties of God in a non-anthropomorphic way. From their study, it appears that, regarding God’s power in creativity, God’s knowledge in mental attributes, and God’s immortality, children are wired or predisposed with the ability to discriminate between what is of God and what is of man or nature. That is, perhaps God designed people with early-emerging biases to conceptualize God. In a word, children seem to be predisposed to being able to discriminate between what is of God and what is of mankind or nature.

Additionally, T. Sharon has found that by three years old children’s sensitivity to intentionality can contribute to their symbolic understanding and development.<sup>4</sup> When adults clearly and intentionally communicate the intent of a symbol to its referent, this greatly aids in the success of children understanding that connection and solving problems. In the study, the more intentional the adult was about communicating the symbol’s relationship to the intended referent (a small hidden Winnie-the-Pooh doll, one placed in the

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<sup>2</sup> Barrett, J. & Richert, R. (2003). Anthropomorphism or preparedness? Exploring children’s God concepts. *Review of Religious Research*, 44(3), 300-312; Clark, S. (2013). *Protestant Evangelical Christian fathers and their intentional involvement in the relational Christian spiritual formation of their children*. (Doctoral Dissertation). ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Full Text Database (AAT 3557980).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon, T. (2005). “Made to symbolize: Intentionality and children’s early understanding of symbols.” *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 6(2), 163-178.



full-scale room and one placed in the same location in a model room) the greater the ability of the child to understand, and in this case find the bear in the life-size room based on the model room. It was routine intentional communication concerning the model, that is, it was a symbol made and intended to help them find the bear that made the difference in success. So Garland's statement that children cannot think symbolically seems unwarranted. In fact, the above discussion suggests that parents and congregations should rethink how they treat and integrate children into the mainstream life of the congregation without sequestering them and also rethink how they view children's ability to comprehend deep theological truths or utilize symbolic reasoning.

Second, Garland acknowledges that learning in spiritual formation is not necessarily linear or in stages (190) yet much of Garland's presentation of family development centers on traditional or stage development. Ample research and theory indeed suggests that learning is not as linear as once thought—which is not to say stage theory is always incorrect.<sup>5</sup> Hay and Nye emphasize that religion should not be equated to spirituality and the “day of imposing stage-oriented assumptions on children was clearly passed” (34). Stonehouse notes that even preschool children can offer comments more characteristic of formal operational thought when more open-ended curricula are utilized.<sup>6</sup> Taking into account various frameworks such as systems or ecological theory as in Brofenbrenner and cognitive development mediated by others in community as theorized by Vygotsky, one can say that children do use cultural information and relations to solve issues.

For example, Vygotsky's non-structuralist approach to social dynamic theory of cognitive developmental can be applied to relational spiritual formation (in contrast to the structuralist approaches of Piaget, Fowler, Erikson, and Kohlberg). According to Vygotsky, learning leads or draws out development as one moves from a zone of actual development (ZAD) to a potential development through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Applying his socio-cultural theory to spiritual formation, faith is mediated between the community and individuals where more mature persons (such as family members or role models in the faith community) deliberately instruct others in this zone of proximal development.<sup>7</sup> Real learning is contingent on intentional instruction. Learning precedes and influences development (not a rigid linearity). For example, a parent can engage with their four-year-old child in spiritual conversation about trusting God while the child is in an area of actual development that may be, according to some, far from that stage of understanding. While some four-year-old children may not fully understand trust (not all adults do, either), others may glean some

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<sup>5</sup> See Coles, R. (1990). *The spiritual life of children*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin; Hay, D. & Nye, R. (1998). *The spirit of the child*. London, England: Fount; Hay, D. & Nye, R. (2006). *The spirit of the child* (Rev. ed.). London, England: Jessica Kingsley; Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Stonehouse, C. (2001). Knowing God in childhood: A study of godly play and the spirituality of children. *Christian Education Journal*, 5NS, 27-45.

<sup>7</sup> Estep, J. (2003, June). *The social dynamics of childhood spirituality: Toward a Vygotskian paradigm for childhood spiritual formation*. Presented at the Childhood Spirituality Conference, Chicago; Jones-Neal, C. (1995). The Power of Vygotsky. In J. Wilhoit & J. Dettoni (Eds.), *Nurture that is Christian: Developmental perspectives on Christian education* (pp. 123-137). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker. Kim, J. (2010); Intellectual development and Christian formation. In J. Estep & J. Kim (Eds.), *Christian formation: Integrating theology & human development* (pp. 63-97). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

understanding from this conversation in the proximal development (the parent intentionally dialoguing with their child in a deeper area) and be helped to move on to a more mature potential development. Spiritual insight develops when the child then, unprovoked or on his or her own unassisted initiative, connects trusting God with something in daily life. The parent is the mentor, intentionally helping their children go from where they are (actual development) to a place where they could not go without adult or mature assistance (potential development) in proximity or by way of community (proximal development).

How might this play out in real life? A parent's intentional dialogue with their four-year-old child might start at the poolside with him asking their child to jump into their arms. By doing such trust jumps and talking to the child about how he or she is trusting the parent—knowing they will not drop him—the child understands trust in relation to the parent. This is a concrete level of development (zone of actual development). The parent then can explain that God is his own heavenly Father and he, too, needs to trust Him, or in a way “jump into His arms.” In doing so, the parent, in community or proximity to his child, is taking him from where his actual development is through a zone of proximal development toward his potential development (trusting, a concept he cannot touch, in a God he cannot see). Then the parent can connect trust with God by dialoguing with his children like this: *Joey, just like you trust me to catch you and I trust God to take care of me, you can trust God to take care of you when you think you are seeing monsters in your room at night. Remember, God cares for you and wants the best for you.* Talking about it most likely will not be sufficient to bring about change, but through routinely having conversations and exemplifying such trust-oriented occasions in daily life, the child will soon connect trust with God. The child will be better able to understand and act upon a concept that at their age is usually not expected to be operationalized.

Third, in such a comprehensive guide, it would have been appropriate for Garland to address alternative views, even if in a cursory manner, thus providing the reader with at least two options to consider. For example, with respect to spanking, which Garland said was derived from poor exegesis, it would be helpful and more comprehensive to at least provide the rationale for other points of view, since in much Christian history spanking has been seen as a viable means of training or discipline when done in a nurturing manner. Another area in which to provide alternative views is found in Garland's “Power and Roles” chapter. On the whole it was a tremendous chapter but in part it belied the comprehensive vision of the book with a one sided discussion of the role of the wife (mother) and husband (father) in family faith formation. Garland also states without discussion that some view the woman as a servant and not a helpmate. In some areas the tone almost seemed condescending; Garland's statement that perhaps Adam “dumbly accepted” the fruit while the woman intelligently engaged in “theological discussion with the serpent” seems quite a stretch exegetically (376). The point being, given that there are numerous sides on such an important directive (spiritual leadership in the family) perhaps at least one alternative view could be offered. For example, Clark (2013) provides an integrated biblical worldview with empirical research regarding paternal involvement in the relational spiritual formation of their children. Within that discussion, mothers, grandparents, mentors, and members of the extended faith community are represented from a biblical account. Space and purpose do not allow further discussion; suffice it to say Garland's work would have benefitted from presenting some other perspectives.

Lastly, with respect to the organization of the book, the addition of an index is welcomed. But the book's three prongs and four sections format would be much easier to follow if the prongs matched the sections, or if they were written in the table of contents and/or reiterated in the text as "Prong 1" clearly associated with its corresponding sections (e.g. Prong 1—Sections 1 and 2; Prong 2—Section 3; etc.). Currently there is no mention of the prongs except when dispersed throughout the text.

### **Conclusion**

On the whole *Family Ministry* is an excellent resource offering practical experience as well as a grasp of empirical, theoretical and Biblical integration into the very core of spiritual formation as family. Just about any subject in this topical area for which a church leader might need some insight or reference is found in this book. And while there may be some issues on which a given reader may not agree with the author, there can surely be found a plethora of "new to me" or "ah-ha" moments when reading the book. I would recommend it to any and all leaders within the Church.



## A Revolution In Mind: Andrew Newberg's *Principles Of Neurotheology*

Ryan McIlhenny

In *Principles of Neurotheology*<sup>1</sup>, Andrew Newberg offers fifty-four theses that lend support to the burgeoning field of *neurotheology*, which seeks to understand more fully the biological functions of the brain in its relation to real spiritual experiences. While arguably the current and most articulate advocate of this emerging discipline, Newberg is not alone and in fact draws together the work of those who have gone before, including creative—and often controversial—thinkers like Mario Beauregard and Michael Persinger, as well as the late James Ashbrook and Eugene D' Aquili.

Newberg, whose previous work includes *The Mystical Mind* (co-authored with d'Aquili) and *Why God Won't Go Away*, believes that neural studies, will provide “a better understanding of the effects of consciousness on the world; the effect of intercessory prayer on health; and the nature of material reality,” may usher in a radical paradigm shift for both science and religion (58). Western scientists, for instance, have becoming increasingly willing to consider ideas coming from the East. Newberg, in fact, values the holistic religious practices from this region of the globe. “Buddhist and Hindu writings,” he writes, “have made extensive evaluations of the human mind and psychology focusing on human consciousness of the ‘self,’ the emotional attachment human beings have to that ‘self,’ and how human consciousness can be altered through various spiritual practices such as meditation” (4). Concurrently, both Buddhism and Hinduism have demonstrated how such variations of the self can be absorbed in the machinery of the cosmos. Arguably, no other tradition has been so focused on “consciousness as an energy that is deeply interconnected with the brain, body, and physical world” (5).

This should not lead us to jettison western practices, though it may demand rethinking or completely abandoning deeply entrenched binaries. As the author points out, even in the western tradition there are aspects of consciousness comporting with neurotheology that can be synthesized with eastern thought. While the religious texts associated with the three dominate faiths in West do not say much by way of precise detail about the anatomy of the soul, they do touch on the holistic nature of the human soul/mind and avoid making sharp dichotomies between heart and mind or reason and emotion, for instance. Thinkers in these traditions from the time of Abraham to the first and seventh centuries have highlighted the fundamental connection between the individual human being and his or her relationship, which includes a profound sense of awe, with either *the* Ultimate (viz., God) or “ultimate concerns.”

Neurotheology's concern with the universality of brain function and spirituality requires what Newberg calls a “megatheology,” which “should contain content of such a universal nature that it could be adopted by most, if not all, of the world's great religions as a basic element without any serious violation of their essential doctrine” (65). Neurotheologists should avoid elevating one religious faith over another and seek out the truth—as far as it relates to brain experiences—of all religions. All that neural technology can do is to

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology* (Ashgate: Farnham, UK, 2010).

appreciate the physiological happenings inside the brain, but it cannot describe in detail the experience or verify the specific doctrines.

Megatheology calls for an attitude of openness on the part of the scientist and theologian. Science and religion, at least in the West, seem to have a natural propensity to crystallize into closed systems, which either generates or further entrenches the political tensions between the two. Such narrow perspectives projects the idea that the universe itself is static, closed, and—let’s face it—boring. Scientists must be careful to distinguish between perspective and being, between their articulation of the world and the world itself. Those dealing with the relationship between faith and reason need to humbly recognize the limitations of their perspective along with an accompanying optimism that perhaps their work will open new avenues of inquiry. Neurotheology must resist dogmatism at every level and remain committed to open inquiry, healthy skepticism, and creativity—each of which are fundamental to both the humanities and the sciences.

The accidents of technology have often forced scientists to become more open. Developing a usable hermeneutic in understanding the brain and spirituality has certainly been augmented by advances in non-invasive neuro-scanning technology that include positron emission tomography (PET), single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Newberg is specifically interested in how the numerous “neuropsychological experiences affect, alter, and constrain the human ability to think specific theological and philosophical thoughts” (87).

Yet the openness that Newberg encourages continues to the (western) philosophic difficulty of identifying the source of such an experience apart from the subject. The fundamental issue, according to Newberg, “is that a brain scan may not be able to distinguish the brain creating an experience or responding to one...everything is a manifestation of the brain’s processes and it becomes more and more difficult to differentiate an external object from its internal representation in the brain” (126). Scientists can certainly identify that something indeed happens internally to those who participate in religious habits, but religious persons often associate them with external realities (e.g., the universe, spirits, or God). Neurotheology identifies a biological experience, but continues to struggle overcoming the epistemological problems of knowing an externally real world.

Perhaps a way around this Cartesian-Kantian dilemma is for neurotheology to reinforce the importance of faith not just as it relates to religion but also in its role in scientific investigation. Newberg admits that the “lines between belief and faith are considerably blurred,” once against upsetting the justified-true-belief paradigm of modern philosophy (35). A large portion of what humans know and believe requires faith. I doubt a majority of people entertain more meta-level question as to why a belief is what it is or is supposed to be. Faith, it is generally understood, is needed for belief in God, yet a significant amount of faith is needed in believing quantum physics or complexity theory. Faith is integral to all knowledge claims and central to human inquiry and investigation.

Repositioning faith at the center of spirit and mind, challenges a naïve correspondence theory of truth, whereby humans mirror a real world as they interact with it. The default setting of modern epistemology is that certainty requires knowing the *ding-an-sich* (things as they are known in themselves) of reality. This conception of knowledge must be abandoned: it is not only impossible but unnecessary to pursue the *ding-an-sich*. The human mind makes

contact with a real world (or worlds) even when what is thought to be true of it is not. Prior to Copernicus, for example, the church was wrong in what they thought was true—namely, the earth at the center of the solar system—but it nonetheless made contact with a real world. Christopher Columbus thought he landed in India. What he thought was true was not, but he nonetheless made contact with a real thing. It took others to contact that same reality that eventually corrected Columbus’s error. Being wrong about the real does not negate reality. Philosopher Esther Meek suggests adopting an epistemology of contact rather than correspondence.

A second way through the epistemological stickiness of knowing the real is to understand the brain’s need for external contact and interaction. Consciousness mature through social interaction: “most, if not all, of our initial beliefs and assumptions are given to us by our caregivers, parents, and family...As we grow, the social influence moves from parents to teachers, friends, and colleagues” (79). The discovery of mirror neurons—neurons that only humans to share the feelings or mental states of others—has shown that all humans are all interconnected at a fundamental level, contributing to a better understanding of human nature.

Finally, although not explored by Newberg, an indelible aid to faith in making contact with reality is the imagination. Knowing is preceded and moves through ignorance—an undoubtedly unsettling realization. Overcoming ignorance requires an imaginative act of will, which often includes the physical body. An “aha” moment of insight or enlightenment, after multiple imaginative guesses and experiments, often comes without person’s knowing it. The religious mind definitely relies on the imagination to conceive of God, but that’s different from saying the mind, as part of its functioning consciousness, invents God. Knowing through analogy in reliance on the design function of the brain toward truth connects us with something real. Humans use a multiplicity of literary and imaginative analogies to crystallize knowledge of the world. We compare and mimic and then use language, which is essentially analogical, to make sense of the world. Even brain function has an analogical mode to it. The brain’s “mirror neurons” allow humans to not see the mental or emotional states of others but even, to a degree, feel them and hence know them. We can better understand who we are by comparing ourselves to others. I am “like” (analogy) them. But knowing the state of others does not mean that the observer needs to know the one being observed in him or her-self.

Add to faith and imagination the function of the human brain, a vast frontier, and its contribution to consciousness, thinkers may be able to render obsolete traditional proofs for the existence of God and reality. As in the case of knowing God, faith is central to knowing other minds. Faith and imagination, working in and through brain function, contributes to knowing another human being without the demand for a preliminary proof of another’s existence. The same is true about belief in God. Philosopher Alvin Plantinga has offered a trenchant argument about how belief in God in no way violates the proper function of the mind working in accordance with a design plan aimed at truth. The “proof” of knowing, therefore, is intrinsic to the process of coming to know.

Even if one were to accept the above correctives to modern epistemology, a theological problem remains—namely, how to account for the competing definitions of God. The consensus among neuroscientists is that the specific identity of God is culturally determined.

God's identity, in other words, is culturally relative. Not everyone in a multi-religious world will accept this. How should scholars deal with this dilemma? The answer rests on further open dialogue between scientists and theologians. Neurotheology should not only rely on the "advances in fields of science such as functional brain imaging, cognitive neuroscience, psychology, and genetics," but also on insights offered by philosophers, historians, literary critics, musicians, and theologians from within the humanities and social sciences (17).

Searching for the ultimate is what makes us fundamentally human. Newberg, of course, has offered important principles to think about, but has not offer practical suggests as to how to sustain such dialogue. Organizations like the Metanexus Institute or interdisciplinary graduate programs that combine neuroscience and humanities at institutions, as in the case of Cal Tech, are already involved in this long-overdue discussion, but there needs to be other academic communities willing to do the same. Neurotheology has a long way to go before neurotheological departments and schools begin to pop up in universities across the country. This seems to be the nature of paradigm shifts. I certainly have faith in its imminent arrival.



BOOK REVIEWS

***From Nothing: A Theology of Creation.* By Ian A. McFarland. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014, 232 pp., \$35.00.**

Ian McFarland's *From Nothing* is a perceptive study of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. This staple of orthodox Christian belief is not merely a statement about the world's origins but an account of God's ongoing relationship with all things. It holds that God alone is uncreated, and that each creature, from angels and humans to earthworms and slugs, finds the source of its being and existence in nothing other than God. Such a distinction between uncreated and created (a "radical ontological discontinuity," xiii) enables the Church to testify to God's faithfulness, by which it is assured that nothing will ever separate the world from God's love (188). The doctrine of creation from nothing justifies the Church's confidence that Jesus, the incarnate Word or *Logos* of God, in an unfathomable display of grace, has drawn the world into the life of the triune God.

The majority of *From Nothing* is organized around two main sections, "*Exitus*" (chapters 2–4) and "*Reditus*" (5–7), each consisting of three chapters. But the scene-setting introduction (chapter 1) is arguably the most important. Here, McFarland explains that the doctrine of creation from nothing is necessary to affirm scripture's conviction that there is only one God, who (mostly implicitly) is regarded as the sole source of all things. Should it be held that God merely shaped the world from pre-existent matter, or that God occupies the same metaphysical plane as creatures, then the claim that God loves and continuously cares for the world is jeopardized, since there would be no guarantee that God will consummate the good but imperfect created order. However, God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, in and through whom God restores the world's trajectory toward eschatological participation in God's life, demonstrates God's ongoing concern for the world, and persistently affirms the latter's essential goodness. Thus Christology is vital for a thoroughgoing doctrine of creation, as this, along with an appreciation of God's life as Trinity, ensures that divine power is not interpreted as tyranny or caprice (23).

"*Exitus*," the first section proper, is concerned with God's origination of creatures. In "God" (chapter 2), McFarland contends that Scripture points to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and defined by the loving, committed relations between the three. These relations indicate that God's being is dynamic, even productive: while the Father is the source of divinity within the Godhead, the Son and the Spirit converge on the Father to produce an ontological unity. Each of the three is present to the other two so that "each hypostasis experiences the life of the other two as its own" (51). This leads to the third chapter, "Creates," where McFarland elaborates on the implications of creation's total dependence on God for its continued being and existence. God grants creation its own identity distinct from God, and intends for creatures to move together through the incarnate Word toward genuine participation in God's own life. Indeed, in "From Nothing" (chapter 4), McFarland shows how the Johannine prologue makes clear that Christology is the ground of the doctrine of creation from nothing. Though this doctrine means that God is not restricted in any way (even the incarnation is not an instance of [self-]limitation), the fact that God creates through God's Word makes it possible to avoid depicting God as "sheer will" (90). The incarnation of God's Word reveals that God is free to include—and has included—creation within God's own life, all through a free decision of grace.

The second section, “*Reditus*,” explores the creature’s orientation toward God, and begins with a discussion of evil (chapter 5). Given God’s intention for creatures to prosper, McFarland acknowledges that the so-called problem of evil must be addressed. He examines the Old Testament books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, drawing insights from each on how evil might properly be conceived. McFarland concludes that the inexplicable reality of evil is something God continually rejects and opposes. Moreover, “the experience of evil is simply evidence that creation has not yet attained God’s goal for it” (133). Creatures are directed toward this goal, the perfection of creation, by God’s providence (chapter 6). God sustains the creature in existence, empowers it to act, and directs it to its proper end. Such an account of providence is not deterministic, McFarland maintains, for God and the creature do not operate on the same metaphysical plane, and so God’s providential action can only affirm the creature in its integrity as it heads toward its eschatological destiny, its perfection or glorification through sharing in the life of the triune God (“*Glory*,” chapter 7). Importantly, the hope of glorification is not an empty fabrication designed to console the grief-stricken, and McFarland considers the prayerful use of icons (“eschatological portraits of their subjects”; 169) and feeding on the Eucharistic bread and wine as genuine anticipations of the age to come.

In his brief conclusion (chapter 8), McFarland recapitulates the foregoing discussions and articulates afresh the reasons why the doctrine of creation from nothing is important for the Church. The doctrine is essentially testimony to God’s christologically defined power and generosity: God is internally productive, insofar as the Father eternally begets the Son through the Spirit, and this productivity finds its creaturely analogue in God’s willing of that which is not God. Moreover, the creation of the world, *this* world, is not arbitrary. Creation from nothing does not mean that God chose “to actualize one possibility among others; rather, God makes it that there can be such a thing as the actualization of possibilities” (187). *This* is the world God generously created through the Word, and *this* is the world God generously continues to sustain through the same Word on its way toward glorification.

McFarland’s study is well structured (chapters 2–4 and 5–7 are chiasmic), consistently insightful (I commend especially McFarland’s exegesis of John 1, his survey of the Old Testament wisdom literature on evil, and the chapter on glory), and incorporates a wealth of material in relatively few pages. Sometimes this requires the reader to attend particularly closely to what McFarland writes; his arguments are often nuanced, and he wastes few words. There are times when McFarland’s points are perhaps *too* subtle. In his introduction, for example, McFarland criticizes Justin Martyr for holding to a “belief in the ontological independence of matter,” which appears to entail God’s inability “to act directly on or be immediately present to creation: God is and remains outside of the phenomenal world” (11). However, it is not obvious to me that what McFarland refers to as matter’s “ontological independence” necessarily prevents God from entering the world and acting within it. (Indeed, in later sections of the passages from which McFarland quotes, Justin goes on to affirm that while the *Father* remains outside the world, the *Son*, who is God, *does* act within the world.) This suggests, perhaps, that McFarland’s own tracing of the logic of creation from nothing, which largely relies on a Thomistic reading of God’s relation to the world, cannot allow for an interpretation of that logic that might take others down alternative conceptual paths. Also, while I found McFarland’s accounts of the Trinity and incarnation in the “*Exitus*” section thoroughly compelling, I was a little disappointed that his thoughts on

these did not seem greatly to influence the “*Reditus*” chapters, especially the chapters on evil and providence. The points McFarland makes are well considered, but I remain unsure as to how, for him, Christology affects the problem of evil, or how the Trinity might elucidate an account of divine providence. But even if there were times when I sought further clarity or detail from McFarland, there were other times when I found myself genuinely inspired by his depth of vision. Time invested in reading *From Nothing* will not be wasted.

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***The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity.*  
By Stephen R. Holmes. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014, 231pp.**

In *The Quest for the Trinity*, Dr. Stephen R. Holmes, senior lecturer in systematic theology at the University of St. Andrews, presents an overview of the historical development of the trinitarian doctrine, specifically exploring its contemporary relevance. Holmes examines the major movements of this doctrine throughout history, honing in on the rich developments of the fourth century for almost half his text’s total length. His presentation offers an excellent introduction to the topic while providing thoughtful commentary on the ways this doctrine, and its developments throughout history, impact our modern theology today.

To begin, Holmes provides a context for the modern discussion of trinitarian doctrine through Barth, Rahner, Zizioulas, and others. Like many other current commentators on the doctrine of the Trinity, Holmes sees Barth as the father of modern Trinitarianism because of his reintroduction of the topic as the foundation to his theology in the prolegomena of his *Church Dogmatics* (4, 9). As part of Barth’s emphasis on revelation throughout his theology, he saw the Trinity as an expression of God’s revelation: “God makes himself known” (5). Barth used Trinitarian doctrine as the lens through which he viewed other doctrines, seeing it as the major topic that differentiates Christianity from all other world religions, thus returning the Trinity to the forefront of theological discourse. Holmes then moves on to Rahner, who emphasized the connection between the economic and immanent Trinity, and to Zizioulas, whose trinitarian contributions revolved around the key issues of personhood and relationality. Next, the text identifies several patterns in the modern Trinitarian conversation, beginning with an emphasis on Trinity and history (as seen in Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Jenson), followed by a connection between Trinity and the practical life of the church (as seen in Boff and Volf), and ending with a look at the philosophical analysis of Trinitarian doctrine (as seen in Plantinga, Leftow, and Rea).

Holmes next proceeds to examine those portions of the biblical text that point to the doctrine of the Trinity and the exegetical ways in which theologians of early Christian history interpreted such texts. His argument here is that in order to understand the theological positions of the patristics, theologians must first understand their hermeneutical methodology. In order to do so, Holmes gives a brief overview of hermeneutical methods, highlighting the modern conversation and explaining how the fourth century conversation differed from that of today. He then discusses several biblical passages, starting in the Old Testament (Proverbs 8, Wisdom 7, Isaiah 53, Psalms 45 and 36), moving to the intertestamental period (2 Baruch 48), and ending with a broad look at the New Testament

(looking at groups of texts of Jesus in relation to the Father, Jesus's identity from the use of divine works and divine titles, and the practice of the worship of Jesus as God).

Chapters three through six provide an extensive look at the development of the doctrine throughout the fourth century. Holmes (rightly) sees this period as so rich and important in the doctrinal developments that he even provides what he calls an *Interlude*, a small chapter to declare the “Harvest of Patristic Trinitarianism” (144-146). It is in these four chapters that Holmes presents an important perspective on the impact of the patristics towards shaping the doctrine of the Trinity as we have it today. Chapter three begins with a consideration of early developments (from Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen), which leads to an examination of the heresy of Arius and his opponents (most notably Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea in 325) in chapter four. The discussion is developed in chapter five by the Eunomian controversy and the Cappadocian Fathers who opposed it (i.e. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) culminating in the Council of Constantinople in 381 and followed by the later work of John of Damascus. In the next chapter, Holmes provides insight into the beginnings of western Trinitarianism, starting with Hilary of Poitiers, focusing on St. Augustine, and ending with a precursory look at the scholastics. Holmes's strength of precise and clear argumentation in these chapters emerges as he explains the intricacy of such details as the differences between multiple *homoian* minority parties and the arguments made by pro-Nicene theologians to defend what is now western trinitarian orthodoxy. Perhaps Holmes's most bold statement of this section can be found in his *Interlude*, “[...]Augustine is the most capable interpreter of Cappadocian Trinitarianism...There is no fundamental difference between East and West [in the fourth century]” whereupon he provides seven fundamentals to define a single, unified fourth-century Trinitarianism (146). While not all theologians may agree with Holmes's conclusion, it is difficult to deny the logical support he provides to substantiate his claims.

Having rightly spent almost half the length of his book in the fourth century, Holmes moves in chapter seven to the medieval debates over the practice of including the *filioque* in the early creeds. As the “well known” cause of the “Great Schism between Eastern and Western Christendom” (147), the *filioque* debate certainly deserves attention in a book describing the history of Trinitarian doctrine. Holmes begins his argument by looking at Western theologians in favor of the inclusion of the *filioque*, noting Anselm, Richard of St. Victor, and, most importantly, Thomas Aquinas (although Holmes offers that Aquinas may be potentially misrepresented by others today). Holmes then briefly provides the eastern perspective through Photius and Gregory Palamas, allowing the reader an account of the opposing viewpoint that is most certainly more succinct. It is clear that Holmes' adheres to the Western tradition but this does not hinder him from explaining the historical Eastern position.

Chapter eight progresses from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, describing the Trinitarian beliefs of the Protestants and several strands of anti-Trinitarianism. Biblical anti-Trinitarians hold to the authority of Scripture but claim that trinitarian theology was imported from Greek philosophy and forced onto the biblical text at a later date, making it unbiblical (c.f. 170-175). Rational anti-Trinitarianism hailed reason as the most important quality of an intellectual and birthed the Deist movement, which sought to find commonalities amongst all religions and disregarded Trinitarianism as merely a “metaphysical speculation” (178). Despite these antagonists to Trinitarian doctrine, Holmes

reassures his readers that “The majority of theological writers from the Reformation down to the end of the eighteenth century were supporters of the received doctrine of the Trinity” (181). Thus, he makes his transition to his final chapter.

In concluding the work, Holmes comes to the contemporary climate of trinitarian doctrine, considering writers from the nineteenth century onwards as “earlier voices in our own conversation” (183). Hegel, Wilhelm, and Coleridge began early in this period by trying to out-reason the rational anti-Trinitarians, using logic to account for the nature of the Trinity. Next, Schleiermacher and Hodge argued for the logical essence but practical uselessness of the doctrine of the Trinity, thus relegating it as an afterthought rather than a starting point for Christian theology. Dorner then shifted the focus of trinitarian study from the ontological substance of God to the personal nature of God. This moral metaphysic moved the goodness of God beyond a discussion of simplicity (i.e. goodness is identical with God, neither governing God nor arbitrarily defined merely because God does it), and towards an understanding of the personal and ethical morality of God (i.e. God makes a conscious choice and ethically *wills* goodness to be good) (193). Holmes then describes the ‘history of religion’ movement of the twentieth century, which sought to reclaim the historical gospel, but this development moved out of serious scholarship when accurate dating of early Gospel texts refuted the claims of its proponents. He closes by briefly restating his claim from the first chapter that the twentieth century trinitarian revival is appropriately seen in Barth, Rahner, Zizioulas, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Jenson, Boff, Volf, Plantinga, Leftow, and Rea; yet the contributions of these theologians can be viewed as repetitions of earlier conversations, echoing back to the fourth century and earlier.

All in all, *The Quest for the Trinity* is an excellent contribution to the field of historical trinitarian theology. Holmes' thorough and readable explanations of the cultural contexts and historical movements of this doctrine throughout history are engaging, thought provoking, and insightful. This book would be a wonderful textbook for a course studying the history of the doctrine of the Trinity and would provide a perfect introduction for a student hoping to identify the major theologians and their contributions to the development of this doctrine.

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***Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism.***  
By Michael J. McVicar. The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 326 pp.

“There is no neutrality!” Such is the Van Tillian rallying cry of Christian Reconstruction. And it is in fact very difficult to find assessments of Reconstructionism, or Theonomy, which approach anything like a “neutral” or even dispassionate appraisal of the movement's significance. This, however, is precisely what Michael McVicar has accomplished in this first critical book length treatment of Rousas John Rushdoony and the Christian Reconstruction movement. Rushdoony's blend of conservative Reformed theology, anti-statist political theories, and detailed application of biblical case laws combined to provide the impetus for a movement that subtly shaped evangelical political action in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Christian Reconstruction applied a libertarian critique of the state's overreach and insisted that the Christian west could only be revived through a process of reconstruction according to the standards of God's law—most notoriously including the call for a fairly straightforward

application of Old Testament case laws. Through access to his personal library and papers, McVicar has put together a fascinating portrait of Rushdoony and the theopolitical movement that he spearheaded.

Despite his obscurity, even within conservative theological circles, Rushdoony's name has been increasingly cited as an important and nefarious influence on Republican politicians, including Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann. For this reason, McVicar is primarily interested in his involvement and influence on twentieth century political conservatism and the Religious Right, though he displays a very strong grasp of Rushdoony's theology and the sources that informed it (Cornelius Van Til in particular). The intention of the book is to tell “the story of the rise and fall of one of the most controversial and poorly understood religious movements to emerge in the United States during the twentieth century,” and it intends to do so by detailing “the intellectual and organizational history of Reconstructionism, a theological project situated at the juncture of religious practice, educational reform, and political action” (4). Rushdoony's ministry serves as lens through which to view religious responses to the cultural upheaval of the twentieth century. McVicar states his central thesis with clarity: “Rushdoony's Christian Reconstructionism resonated with a wider conservative milieu determined to address the interconnected problems of religion and governance that emerged in U.S. culture in the middle of the twentieth century” (10). This argument is supported by a narrative of the development of American conservatism, the political consciousness of evangelical fundamentalism, and a chronicling of Rushdoony's involvement in both spheres through a study of his publications and private letters. Rushdoony's unique and controversial political theology gives an inside look at how twentieth century conservatism and Protestant evangelicalism reciprocally defined one another.

McVicar uncovers the degree to which Rushdoony reached beyond the small Reformed and evangelical circles in which he wrote, taught, and lectured to influence and shape the broader conservative political culture. The first chapter covers the history of Rushdoony's family's immigration from Turkey to the United States, his early education and missionary work at the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Nevada, and his discovery of Van Til's presuppositional apologetics and the principle of antithesis. It shows how this early ministry experience informed his critique of the modern state, seeing the problems of the reservation as a microcosm of the failures of the state in western culture. The second chapter focuses on Rushdoony's involvement in the development of American conservatism through well-funded conservative and libertarian organizations like the Intercollegiate Society of Individuals, the Volker Fund, and the Center for American Studies. While the conservative movement was forming along non-sectarian lines (in religious terms), Rushdoony was working for the latter think tank and pushing it to adopt an explicitly Christian and Reformed basis. This sectarianism, paralleled by his denominational squabbles, ensured that Rushdoony would not be a major player in this first wave of conservative formation.

Ultimately, it was through the grassroots influence of his own small think tank, the Chalcedon Foundation, that Rushdoony began to shape evangelical political engagement. Chapters three and four helpfully contextualize Rushdoony's detailed application of biblical law as a response to the cultural upheaval of the 1960s. McVicar contrasts the liberal responses to social ills, including wealth redistribution and other governmental interventions, with conservative “law and order” responses to crime, poverty, and radicalism. He situates

Rushdoony's critique of the state and his prescription of biblical law as a sectarian version of this "law and order" theme. McVicar describes Rushdoony's conviction that "Christians must turn their attention of the legal foundations of their religion. This insight—however controversial, loved or loathed it would become eventually—grew out of Rushdoony's perception that lawlessness and rebellion were creeping into all spheres of society" (122). This perception resulted in a contentious relationship to neo-evangelical leaders and institutions, like the publication *Christianity Today*, which Rushdoony saw as compromising with a faithless culture. McVicar's detailed examination of the heated exchanges between Rushdoony and the editors of *Christianity Today* offer a fascinating snapshot of the developing political consciousness of evangelicalism.

Chapters five and six show how the Christian Reconstruction movement spread in Reformed institutions and churches through men like Gary North and Greg Bahnsen. These men helped to make the rhetoric of "dominion" common currency within the developing Religious Right, even while major evangelical leaders shied away from explicit associations with Rushdoony. The divisions that ultimately developed within the Reconstructionist camps (between Rushdoony's operation in Vallecito, CA and North's camp in Tyler, TX) are an important part of McVicar's narrative. In addition to showing how North's colossal publishing efforts helped to spread Reconstructionist ideas to the broader evangelical world (thus influencing prominent conservative political figures), this part of the narrative also reveals how the contentious and inflexible ideas and rhetoric of Reconstructionism ultimately caused it to crumble from within. These chapters also deal with what might well be the most visible lasting result of Rushdoony's ministry: his role as an expert witness in legal cases "helped make homeschooling legal by shaping legal reasoning in small and large cases across the United States" (175-176). While many of Rushdoony's goals for the reconstruction of a Christian society are hard for even his sympathizers to affirm, this very practical outcome of diversifying the educational landscape in the U.S. is something that can be appreciated across wide ideological lines.

McVicar's access to Rushdoony's personal letters and library adds fascinating personal details to what is otherwise an intellectual biography. Such detail alternatively lends support and undermines evaluations of Rushdoony (both religious and secular) that "liken him unfavorably to Islamic extremists" (215). McVicar observes that "his journals depict a man with seemingly only two emotional states: spitting rage and tender, fatherly love" (11). His obsession with books and his wide reading are also noted. He annotated his books with precision, and this marginalia reveals that "a kind of intertextuality governed Rushdoony's very being; the Bible governed his approach to information and determined the way he read every text he encountered" (81). McVicar perfectly captures the fortress mentality that characterizes Rushdoony's writings and his intellectual engagement, however expansive that engagement was. The personal portrait that McVicar paints is of a stern and unbending individual, but not a man without compassion. Above all, he is characterized by a commitment to thoroughly working out the implications of God's law in every aspect of his personal life, as well as every sphere of the broader culture.

The weaknesses of McVicar's volume are few. At times, his treatment of the Reformed theological concepts that constituted Rushdoony's thought, like covenantal theology and presuppositional apologetics, is less nuanced than it could be. His reliance on firsthand testimony from Gary North to support important details relating to Rushdoony's influence

on major political figures (144-145) is somewhat curious and incongruous, since North is notorious for the exaggerated claims of the movement's influence. In fact, McVicar appears well aware of North's unreliability in other parts of the book. However, these quibbles are only peripheral issues within an otherwise important and masterful study. Rushdoony and Christian Reconstruction are easily vilified—and not without reason. However, McVicar pushes through the understandable reactions to the more shocking elements of the movement's agenda to offer insight and context for this obscure, fascinating, and important figure in the development of twentieth century conservative politics and religion.

Though the theological battles surrounding Christian Reconstruction have subsided, the legacy of Theonomy remains important in conservative Reformed theology. Douglas F. Kelly, a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary and the former editor of Rushdoony's *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, has written two important volumes of systematic theology that continue the strongly trinitarian focus of Rushdoony's work. The work of Peter J. Leithart provides an even more pointed example. As one of the most important and original Reformed theologians writing today, Leithart, who formerly worked in Reconstructionist circles, has critically taken up and developed some of the seeds of Rushdoony's theopolitical thought—most notably in *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (IVP Academic, 2010) and *Between Babel and the Beast: America and Empires in Biblical Perspective* (Cascade Books, 2012). Like Rushdoony, Leithart recognizes that the relationship between Church and state is one of competing religious visions, even while his proscription of a biblical typology to narrate this relationship is far more subtle and carefully considered than Rushdoony's heavy handed applications of biblical law. While the heated rhetoric, simplistic historical perspectives, and disturbing legalism of Reconstructionism are thankfully no longer live debates in Reformed circles, the insightful and faithful elements of the movement's heritage are being picked up and brought to new life through engagement with broader theological traditions.

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***Pascal the Philosopher: An Introduction.* By Graeme Hunter. University of Toronto Press: Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2013.**

No one would deny that Pascal is a philosophical writer. A rigorist ethics implicitly underlies the biting anti-jesuitical satire of his *Provincial Letters*. The fragmentary, posthumously published *Pensées* abound in startlingly acute analyses and *aperçus* of the status of human nature and wisdom, even if they are eventually to be pressed into the service of vindicating Christianity in the minds of freethinkers. And of course among them is a fragment containing one of the most famous of all philosophical arguments, his celebrated “wager” on belief in the existence of God. Acute, eye-opening, forcefully and sometimes hauntingly expressed, these fragments probe the *grandeur* and *misère* of human nature; the foundations of human and divine justice; the sceptic/dogmatist divide; the nature of proof; and many another topic much quarried by inquirers whose status as philosophers is not only unquestioned but paradigmatic.

Yet the histories of modern philosophy typically give Pascal but short space and shorter shrift. It is as though they judged that, while to speak strictly he is not a philosopher,



nonetheless he merits mention in passing as bearing a sort of family resemblance to the breed.

It is this view of Pascal, a common one even if not the most common, that Graeme Hunter engages and seeks to transcend in this book. For he strives to show that despite the Christian preoccupations of the *Pensées*, and despite the lack of systematic exposition we perforce encounter in a collection of fragments—though it is too much to say that it is “practically formless” (p. 18)—Pascal does far more than cursorily address sporadic elements of philosophy in keeping with the needs of a Christian apologetic. As he deftly guides the reader through the many strata and facets of Pascal’s inquiries, Hunter shows us a Pascal who sifts and weighs not only philosophical issues but the philosophical enterprise itself, and who does it in ways that are as radically philosophical as they are challenging to philosophy.

Hunter’s book could well serve as a model of its kind—engaging, well-informed, nuanced, admirably clear and free of jargon, it is remarkably even-handed as it beckons the reader to enlist in just the kind of serious and candid inquiry to which Pascal strove to incite his readers.

Following one of the five *pensées* entitled “ordre “ (Lafuma 12/Sellier 46) in the *liasse* of the same name, Hunter sees the three main lines of Pascal’s apologetic strategy as follows. First, there is the need to show unbelievers, whom he supposes to fear that Christianity might be true and indeed to hold it in abhorrence, that it is not contrary to reason; secondly, to show that it is “aimable” and so make them wish that it were true; and, finally, to show that it is true. But all of these will require recourse to philosophical argumentation, although for the second it must be of a kind that engages one’s emotions. It is for this context that Hunter stresses the role of the wager since it offers one a chance of securing the limitlessly desirable good of infinite happiness (L418/S680, “une infinité de vie infiniment heureuse à gagner”).

But though philosophy is necessary to Pascal’s project, if we are brought round to his view of it we must expect to find it to be of no avail at the last. For Pascal cuttingly contends that philosophy must end in impasse and aporia. At the end of the day, skepticism indeed succeeds in confounding dogmatic philosophy, but human nature, utterly unable to refrain from believing and asserting, no less powerfully confounds the skeptics (L131/S164).

In other words, if we speak but according to our natural lights, “Le pyrrhonisme est le vrai” (L691/570, “Pyrrhonism is the truth”) is reason’s last word on itself. But alas, Pyrrhonism itself forbids us to acknowledge even this much since of course it bids us suspend all judgment in the face of universal uncertainty. And worse yet, for good or ill our nature is such that we cannot but believe in the first principles on which all argumentation, be it skeptical or dogmatic, finally rest. Whence aporia, impasse, shipwreck: “Vous ne pouvez fuir une de ces sectes ni subsister en aucune” (L131/S164, “You can neither avoid nor exist in these [the skeptical or dogmatic] sects”). Small wonder then that “Se moquer de la philosophie c’est vraiment philosophiser” (L518/S671, “To make jest of philosophy is truly to philosophize”).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the almost equally famous L/533/S457. When Plato and Aristotle “se sont divertis à faire leurs lois et leurs politiques ils l’ont fait en jouant... c’était comme pour régler un hôpital des fous” (

Hunter takes the dogmatism/skepticism dispute as his lead-in to the relation of Pascal to Philosophy. He focuses primarily on the report of Pascal's *Entretien avec M. de Sacy*. (By the by: embedded in Nicholas Fontaine's *Mémoires ou histoire des solitaires de Port-Royal*, whose original text was recently discovered and published by Pascale Thouvenin [Champion, 2001], the *Entretien* is now available complete for the first time. As a result, many of its "énigmes" [as per Courcelle's classic 1960 edition] are far more tractable.)

Hunter correctly sees Pascal as here staging a kind of "Tournament of Champions" by pitting Montaigne, a skeptic par excellence, against a paradigmatic dogmatist, Epictetus. Hunter then frames the former's pyrrhonist triumph in the larger context of classical and contemporary explanations for "philosophical failure" as evidenced by the glaring lack of consensus among philosophical inquirers.

As he reminds us, from Pascal's own perspective, that of Augustinian Christianity, the corruption of human nature consequent on the Fall helps to explain not only our "philosophical failure" but our political and other failures as well. But Hunter goes far beyond this with a discussion of philosophical failure that is wide-ranging, informative and nuanced. It ranges from scrutinizing discordant assessments of the ontological argument as a sort of case-in-point to current discussions of "confabulation," the all-too-human predisposition to hold convictions that, though strong and sincere as can be, are ill-founded or even delusional.

But whatever problems beset it, it is philosophic inquiry, and in particular Socratic practice, to which Hunter has recourse in his attempt to understand and to orient Pascal within the philosophical tradition.

Highly sensitive to the force of skepticism, both Pascal and Socrates replace dogmatism, not with the universal solvent of doubt, but with inquiry through dialectic. As a paradigmatic example, Hunter considers the latter part of the *Gorgias* in which Socrates weighs his own vision of the good life, wherein wrongdoing is the greatest evil that can befall him who does it, against Callicles' view that power for the greatest self-indulgence is the greatest good. In a penetrating analysis of this exchange, Hunter represents Socrates as considering that, while his way of life cannot be conclusively vindicated by reasons all would accept, nonetheless his dialectic has shown the shortcomings of Callicles' way of living while at the same time providing substantial support for his own.

We can see that the former consideration dovetails nicely with the Pascalian view that rational means, even if they are but a sort of *pis aller*, can reveal to us not only their own debility but that of rival faiths, the "Fausseté des autres religions." And as for the latter consideration, it is mirrored nicely by Pascal's judgment that the "preuves de notre religion," while not conclusive, are as good or better than those for the alternatives (L835/S423).

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"[When they] amused themselves by drawing up their laws and politics, they did it in play ... it was like laying down rules for a lunatic asylum"). The most philosophical part of their lives was not their doctrines—small surprise, as the passage (in Sellier) appears under the rubric "Pyrrhonisme"—but living "simplement et tranquillement."

Indeed, this very insufficiency of proof is not only explicable but predictable. For the hidden god Christianity proclaims deliberately wills the obscurity that confronts us precisely so that those who truly seek him may find him while those who do not will not (L149/S182). Indeed, in the wager fragment Christianity even receives some confirmation by virtue of truly proclaiming and predicting the lack of proof that it unquestionably exhibits—i.e., the very insufficiency of proof is a proof of sorts!

But why take what amounts to a leap of faith to embrace the Socratic or the Christian way of life? Hunter's answer, grounded in both Plato and Pascal, is that when reason can take us no further, what comes next, if it is not to be epistemic and practical paralysis, must be what he calls *apodeixis*.

Since this term can mean rational proof or demonstration, it is liable to mislead here. Hunter seems to take it in the sense of an *exhibition* of what a position involves or allows. This will include *inducements* that are ultimately based in the emotions. Among them are gain and loss, part of what in the widest sense we have to hope for or to fear from our assent or denial.

Hunter sees the wager, of which he offers an extended and close analysis, engaging commentators as he goes, as offering Pascal's chief inducements to the free-thinking inquirer who hitherto has followed him as far as reason's last step (cf. "la dernière démarche de la raison" in L188/S220). For a key parameter for the wager is the assumption that, as regards the truth of the existence of God, reason is at an impasse ("La raison n'y peut rien déterminer").

The inducements to believing that he does exist include not only the possibility of gaining an infinite good for a finite stake—an infinity of infinite happiness for a lifetime of believing in God and acting accordingly—but also the reward of leading a (Christian) life that is beneficial for one here and now, regardless of whether the wager is won or lost. (The latter consideration, a specifically Christian one, is urged in the fragment containing the wager but it is not part of the wager argument per se. Meant to quell emotional resistance to accepting the logic of the argument, it looks forward to the rest of Pascal's Apology wherein the inquirer will come to learn such proofs as the faith has, glimpsing "le dessous du jeu" from "l'Écriture et le reste".)

Hunter sees the wager as meant to produce belief in the Christian God rather than, as does this reviewer, merely in a God ("S'il y a un Dieu, il est ....") whom subsequent inquiry will identify as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His account thus treats the wager as a sort of capstone argument for Pascal, a clincher. However Laurent Thirouin and Philippe Sellier have shown that the wager is a preliminary theme Pascal's apologetic endeavor, "un discours pour capter l'écoute." It is thus intended as a jolt to awaken, fix and orient the reader's attention—"un dialogue sur le seuil" (Sellier) thematically linked to the contents of the *liasse* "Commencement" and meant ultimately to figure in it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Laurent Thirouin, *Le Hasard et les règles* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), p. 188-189; Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et la littérature I: Pascal* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), pp. 59-61 (from "L'ouverture de l'apologie pascalienne," first published in 1992). Cf. David Wetsel, *Pascal and Disbelief: Catechesis and Conversion in the Pensées* (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 1994), pp. 23-35 for a very detailed discussion. For this

In fine, for Hunter, both Pascal and Socrates engage their interlocutors so as to put on trial, not only this or that argument, but one's whole way of life. If, as no one doubts, Socrates is no marginal philosopher but a philosopher par excellence, can Pascal be otherwise?

Of course no study can leave one with no reservations. For example, at the level of incidental detail one might well murmur a demur at calling Callicles, who at bottom wishes Socrates well, really "diabolical" (p. 216). A more significant demur would concern the extent of Pascal's theological knowledge (p. 9). Though theology is not his *métier*—no more than is philosophy—his grasp of it is far above a mere amateur's.

And in a wider context, is it really the case, as Hunter and William James would have it, that the wager proposes belief specifically in the Christian God (p.125)? It would then constitute an Apology unto itself. Hunter considers that, even if mere belief in *a* god were textually warranted, it would not matter in the end since it would not rule out any, even "crackpot" promises of eternal ecstasy. But the does the wager stand alone for Pascal? Even if the wager itself should not rule out any promises of reward for correct belief, is not the subsequent inquiry into "le dessous du jeu" via "L'Écriture et le reste" meant to vindicate Christianity as the best grounded one we can find?

One can easily understand the wager as only a stage in the unbeliever's progress and still assign that argument the role Hunter sees for it vis à vis the tripartite division of Pascal's endeavor in L12/S46. This is in fact what Thirouin does.<sup>3</sup>

A few queries may suggest themselves that, strictly speaking, are tangential or supplemental to Hunter's project. With respect to the former, even if the "ordre" outlined in the fragment he follows lends itself most helpfully to the grouping of Pascal's apologetic themes, how does it converge with differently formulated frameworks—e.g. those proposed by other fragments entitled "ordre" in the *liasse* of that name?

As regards the latter, if we wish to go beyond Hunter's scope—for he is not endeavoring to catalogue philosophical positions in Pascal—we might ask what we can learn of Pascal's ethics. This would require a close look at the *Provincial Letters*, especially IV-X which contain a devastatingly satiric treatment of the moral laxity of Jesuit and other casuists.

The Letters are of course addressed to an audience of fellow Christians, not to potential converts, and so presuppose the validity of Christian morality. They are thus overtly theological rather than philosophical. But if we put issues of religious authority and exegesis to one side, what purely ethical principles are implicit in the discussion?

For example, underlying the doctrine of "probable opinion" that Pascal (rightly?) ridicules is the assumption that there is typically more than one legitimately defensible ethical course of action in a given situation. A sign of this lies in the fact that serious moral theologians have in fact endorsed different actions in a particular situation as permissible in

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reviewer's views see *Fire in the Dark: Essays on Pascal's Pensées and Provinciales* (University of Rochester Press, 2005), pp. 8-12. In "The Role of the Wager in Pascal's Apologetics," *The New Scholasticism*, (LVII I, Winter 1983), where the question of Pascal's intentions is left to the side, the wager is understood as an early element supplying a logical rather than a rhetorical apologetic need.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 187-189.

good conscience. Now, this doctrine explicitly allows a person to choose any one of these approved courses, since all are morally safe, rather than to weigh which might be the best. Thus, it assumes that for us, to be good is good enough. We are not obligated to pursue what is best, to scale the heights of heroic virtue.

“Be ye perfect” thus becomes, despite its imperative mood, not obligatory but a mere counsel of perfection. But what reasons would dictate Pascal’s contemptuous dismissal of this view of morals and vindicate the rigorist, perfectionist view that the Letters presuppose as a touchstone of moral truth? What is ethical success?

All in all, Hunter’s lucid and humane book is a fine production. Like its subject, it defies easy summary—a sign, perhaps, of fidelity to its subject. Wide-ranging, it engages not only Pascal but both his older, classic critics—most notably Voltaire, James and Nietzsche—and a goodly selection of contemporary ones as well. Above all, it pays Pascal the deep compliment of taking his ideas to be worthy of the most impartial and candid scrutiny, and it can well repay the engagement of readers who peruse it in the same spirit.

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**Alvin Plantinga. *Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. 129. \$16.00, paper.**

Alvin Plantinga’s influence in the realm of philosophy, particularly epistemology, cannot be overstated. In the decades prior to his work it was widely considered intellectually dishonest to be a philosopher who believed in God. Much of his work has focused on the rationality of belief in God as well as, more recently, the rationality of Christian belief.

In 1993, Plantinga published two important volumes: *Warrant: The Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function*. The first volume surveys the state of affairs in the field of epistemology. He traces most current epistemological theories back to the deontological internalism of Descartes and Locke, thinkers who posited that one is duty-bound (deontology) to form beliefs only on the basis of evidence that is accessible to one’s mind (internalism). Plantinga spends most of the first volume presenting defeaters for all the varieties of internalism to set up his own externalist theory in the second book, *Warrant and Proper Function*. There, he provides four conditions for warrant: (1) one’s cognitive faculties are adapted (by God or evolution) to our surroundings and (2) they function properly to produce a belief; (3) our cognitive functions that produce the belief are aimed at truth; (4) the design plan of the faculties must be a good plan, i.e., the faculties are created to be reliable (so it was not a lazy demon or angel who designed them). He makes some qualifications and provides a complex analysis of this “design plan” (whether by God or by evolution or both), all of which provides the scaffolding for a third book, *Warranted Christian Belief* (WCB).

WCB was published in 2000, which gave Plantinga some time to read critiques of his first two works and make some minor adjustments to defend his ideas. Many of these critiques came in a large-scale edited work in 1996 (*Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology* [Rowman and Littlefield, 1996]). WCB has become a groundbreaking work in religious epistemology, arguing that Christian belief can indeed have warrant (i.e., be rational). But WCB runs to 500

pages, uses complex philosophical jargon and logical formulas, and contains multiple, dense excurses. So Plantinga had pity on his would-be readers and decided to condense WCB into 126 accessible pages. As he says of this most recent book, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, it “is a shorter and (I hope) more user-friendly version of WCB” (vii). And indeed it is.

Since this is a review of *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, the purpose of which is to condense WCB for a general readership, I will briefly summarize the contents that are more fully expounded in WCB and then discuss the value of this shorter work. The first chapter evaluates Kantian theologians who say we cannot predicate anything of God, but Plantinga notes even such a supposition is self-defeating, since we could not predicate about God that we cannot predicate about God. Chapter two clarifies the problem he’s seeking to solve: the *de jure* question of whether Christian belief is rational. The best statement of this *de jure* problem comes from Freud and Marx, who argue that Christian belief is wish-fulfillment to rescue us from this dark world (Freud) and a result of cognitive malfunction, especially because of our dysfunctional society and environment (Marx). Chapter three develops the Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model, that belief in God is properly basic (does not need argumentation, but is immediate to our mind) due to the *sensus divinitatis*. If Christianity is true, then it is likely true that God created us with this *sensus divinitatis* and therefore our basic belief in God is rational. Chapters four to seven extend the basic model of belief in God to include the “great things of the Gospel,” including the plight of sin, the Holy Spirit’s revelation of faith to us, and our basic belief in the gospel by means of the Spirit.

After expounding his positive theory, Plantinga defends it against objections and defeaters. Chapter seven argues that religious experience (and thus Christians’ basic belief in God and the gospel) is philosophically valid, notwithstanding the objections of some philosophers. Chapter eight argues that historical biblical criticism has far too many suppositions and philosophically problematic assumptions to be a real defeater for Christian faith. Chapter nine defends against the defeater of religious pluralism, which he shows to be self-defeating given its own claims. Lastly he defends against the problem of evil. Even in the face of a direct confrontation with evil, which leads to a basic belief in the non-existence of God, anyone with a properly restored *sensus divinitatis* (through the Holy Spirit) will not disbelieve in God, even if they question evil.

Plantinga succeeds marvelously in condensing his massive work into a concise 126 pages. He keeps footnotes to a minimum and still manages to cram in plenty of his characteristic witty banter. The final effect is a small book that gives a philosophical defense for the rationality of Christian belief, which can be read by most interested persons. The book is probably still at a level above the average layman, who may not possess the philosophical categories or the sustained interest in the given issues. Even as swift as it moves in comparison with WCB, it contains plenty of philosophy proper, from the two-world ontology of Kant to the philosophical objections of religious pluralism. So this is not a book for everyone, and I assume those who will most benefit from this book are theologians without much philosophical training.

As far as the ideas of the book are concerned, there have been plenty of attempts to critique his theory of warrant and Plantinga has offered many responses. One of the most questionable aspects of his theory is probably his idea of the *sensus divinitatis* as a capacity for basic belief in God, which was broken in the fall and now functions improperly until

restored by the Holy Spirit. It may be better to consider the *sensus divinitatis* as always revealing to human beings God's existence, but that they suppress that knowledge until the Holy Spirit renews them. This is a minor point that would not alter Plantinga's overall argument for the rationality of Christian belief, but that would arguably be more in line with Paul's flow of thought in Romans 1.

Probably the most enduring legacy of Plantinga's trilogy and of *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, is that theologians, biblical scholars, and laymen can know that a renowned philosopher has shown Christian belief to be warranted *if true*. Plantinga notes correctly that epistemology is based on metaphysics, so his epistemological theory is dictated by the metaphysical realities of the world (40). This means Plantinga has not proven Christianity to be true, or even given any arguments in its favor. He has shown that *if Christianity is true* then believing the great things of the gospel is completely rational and warranted, and indeed it is those outside the faith whose cognitive faculties are dysfunctional and in need of restoration. Plantinga should be thanked for distilling his work into this accessible and helpful book.

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***Galatians and Christian Theology: Justification, the Gospel, and Ethics in Paul's Letter.* Elliott, Mark W., Scott J. Hafemann, N. T. Wright, and John Frederick, eds. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 380 pages. Paperback, \$39.00.**

The essays collected in this volume were originally given at the University of St. Andrews' triennial conference on 'Scripture and Theology' (ix). For the purposes of publication, the volume is divided into three parts, namely, 'Justification', 'Gospel', and 'Ethics'.

Part I (Justification) is initiated by N. T. Wright, who contends that, in light of the narrative structure of Galatians 3 and 4, Paul's use of *Christos* not only refers to the active meaning of Messiah but highlights the apostle's incorporative ecclesiology, which is a participatory ecclesiology rooted in the notion of messiahship. Matthew Novenson investigates Paul's use of *ioudaismos* in Galatians 1:13-14, noting that the verbal form *ioudaizō* refers to *non-Jews* who adopt Jewish rituals whereas the noun *ioudaismos* refers to a portion of *Jews* beginning in the Maccabean era who promoted the adoption of Jewish customs and rituals. Novenson's observations challenge any simplistic equivocation between the noun *ioudaismos* and the modern colloquial connotation behind the term 'Judaism'. Next, Pullman and Elliot survey the contributions of Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Augustine, as well as the so-called *Carmen adverte Marcionitas* poem, demonstrating the level of interpretive sophistication achieved within the corpus of these early writers. Additionally, Thomas Söding seeks to extract the ecumenical potential of Galatians, by articulating how Paul's justification theology opens up missionary and ecclesial dimensions through a threefold call of remembrance and actualization.

Chapters 5 through 7 discuss the particularities of Galatians 3:10-14. Timothy Gombis makes the unique contention that Galatians 3:10-14 is a series of *a hoc* arguments with the rhetorical goal of dissuading his non-Jewish readers from Judaizing. According to Gombis, the notion that the law curses all who disobey (Gal. 3:10) is simply intended to highlight the incoherence of the Judaizers' position (86) and is not an actual component of Paul's

theology. Timothy Wengert and Scott Hafemann both provide chapters that examine Luther's reading of Galatians 3:6-14. Wengert considers both the development of Luther's exegetical observations and interpretive techniques, beginning with his 1519 *Argumenta* before considering his 1535 commentary on Galatians. Hafemann offers a 'Yes' and 'No' reading of Luther, appreciating his reading of 'works of the law' as the demands of Torah and Luther's perspective on the contrast between the law and the gospel as a 'metonymy for a larger set of realities' (122). However Hafemann sees the law/gospel contrast not in an anthropological dimension (as Luther did) but historically, namely, one that is set within the history of God's covenant with Israel and the arrival of the Messiah. Hence, Hafemann challenges Luther's objective rendering of *pistis Iesou* due to the eschatological nature of covenant history.

The final three essays of Part I turn the reader's attention to various historical-theological considerations. Javier Garcia's essay examines Mannermaa's *Christ Present in Faith* and offers a series of critiques to the proposed view offered therein, particularly Mannermaa's neglect of Luther's 1535 preface in *Lectures to Galatians*. Next, Mark Elliot provides a *tour de force* in historical reflection which seeks to substantiate the notion that developments surrounding first century Judaism need not result in a complete revision of Paul's justification theology. Noting a myriad of pivotal figures, Elliot's essay provides a key resource for those seeking a coherent exposition of a lengthy and intricate theological history. Bruce McCormick concludes Part I with a consideration of both Martyn and de Boer's apocalyptic reading of Paul, highlighting their theological concerns which lie behind a subjective genitive reading of *pistis Iesou*. For McCormick, the later theology of Karl Barth secures the interests of these apocalyptic interpreters without retaining the weaknesses latent within a 'subjective genitive' reading.

Part II loosely centers upon the theme 'Gospel', however the first three chapters largely discuss the 'apocalyptic' reading of Paul. Beverly Gaventa opens this section by considering how the singularity of the gospel (both as an event and as a totalizing impact upon the *'ego'*) creates the parameters for a proper understanding of the relationship between the forensic and participatory streams of the epistle. This is followed by Richard Hays who challenges one aspect of the apocalyptic reading (that the Apostle's theology is a sharp break with Judaism) with the contention that Paul develops a 'retrospective hermeneutical transformation of Israel's story in light of God's startling redemptive action (204)'. In other words, from the vantage point of the 'new age', one may now have an appropriate retrospective reading of Israel's Scripture that illuminates God's previously scripted story; a story which 'prefigures God's action in Christ' (208). Following Hays, Michael Cover challenges the tendencies of Martyn and de Boer to read Galatians 4:21-31 'in contrast to Philo', offering instead a reading that views Paul in continuity with the Hellenistic practice of allegoresis, which itself is transformed by the apocalyptic core of his gospel (223, 229).

The final four essays in Part II offer various theological reflections on the nature of 'time' in Galatians. For instance, Edwin Chr. van Driel suggests that a supralapsarian reading of Paul's christology avoids the inherent problems associated with the approaches of N. T. Wright and J. Louis Martyn, which, according to Driel, both (implicitly?) promote God's entrance into the cosmos as a contingent 'plan B' (234). Todd Still seeks to integrate the work of Martyn (apocalyptic) and Hays (narrative) explicating both continuity and discontinuity on historical and apocalyptic planes. In sum, the 'ever-new story of Jesus'



apocalypses...exposes the alternative narrative being offered by the teachers...(247-48).<sup>7</sup> Darren Somner considers Karl Barth's theology of time as it relates to Paul's expression in Galatians 4:4. For Somner, following Barth, God's time is eternity (real time), namely, the simultaneity of past, present, and future, while our time is fallen (lost time), effected by the fall and in need of redemption. Jesus Christ is a 'third time' (fulfilled time), marking 'God's own self-revealing presence within the bounds of creation (252)', and thus is the fulfillment of God's previously purposed covenant. Finally, Scott Swain seeks to explicate how Galatians 4:4-7 contains an implicit Trinitarian theology, especially through the 'grammar' of divine agency which itself suggests that the twofold mission of the Son and the Spirit be seen as an example of God's immediate divine action (265).

Part III forms the final section of this volume and is categorized under 'Ethics'. The first essay, Oliver O'Donovan identifies the traditional importance of Paul's 'flesh/Spirit' contrast within the Christian reflection, however he also identifies important *heilsgeschichtliche* elements within this contrast, which together cast a wider interpretive purview upon these significant Pauline designations. On Galatians 5:17 specifically, Jean-Noël Aletti prefers the reading that sees the relative clause in 17d as a positive reference, so that the flesh opposes the Spirit to prevent the believer from doing 'good things'. In sum, 17b-c are incidental clauses located between 17a and the final *hina* clause in 17d. Additionally, John Barclay argues that the ethical content of Galatians 6:1-6 is presented in such a fashion that it serves to protect the community of faith from vying cultures that promote the competition of honor.

Volker Rabens outlines eight criticisms of the 'indicative-imperative' model of Pauline ethics before presenting the alternative approach offered by Zimmermann, namely, 'implicit ethics (295)'. What Rabens seeks to establish is an 'implicit indicative imperative' ethic wherein the filial and experiential reality that is brought about by the Spirit empowers the religious-ethical life. Simon Zahl argues that 'affective Augustinianism', that which emphasizes the affective capacities of human nature over against the rationale, possesses some helpful interpretive aids towards a reading of Galatians 5:16-25. However a 'dramatic reading', one that builds upon the insights of narrative theology and American pragmatism, demands that the (Galatian) reader carefully analyze their own experiences and allow those experiences to bear upon their reading of Galatians. This is the paradigm in which one should wrestle with the 'tension' between divine and human agency. Finally, Mariam Kamell offers a number of complimentary parallels between Epistles of James and Galatians, concluding with a selection of observations regarding the contribution of these parallels to the development of a biblical theology of sanctification.

The editors of this volume should receive a positive evaluation for assembling a wide cast of authors and topics within a single resource, all of which target a critical Pauline epistle. The inclusion of historical, systematic, and ethical reflection is an exceptionally insightful aspect of this work, particularly as many of the chapters address the much neglected latter portions of Galatians. More attention to Paul's varied use of the Old Testament, the place of the 'Spirit' in the epistle, and the salvation-historical images used in Galatians 4 would serve to broaden the scope of the volume even further, however the emphases selected for this volume are certainly justified in light of the abundant literature surrounding earlier scholarly debates.

We may conclude with two final observations. First, this volume is a commendable assortment of essays which seek to present new synthetic proposals that neither abandon nor simply repeat earlier perspectives. Second, for those seeking a recent appropriation and interaction with the 'apocalyptic' school, principally with the work of J. Louis Martyn and Martinus C. de Boer, this volume will be a notable tool. In sum the editors and authors of this volume have together produced of a beneficial contribution to the field of Galatians studies for graduate students and faculty alike, one that opens new ventures within the interpretive enterprise.

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## ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

### 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.