Journal for BAPTIST THEOLOGY & MINISTRY

Fall 2024 • Vol. 21, No. 2

The Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

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Bob Stewart's Legacy & The Greer-Heard Forum

Tawa J. Anderson, PhD

Tawa Anderson serves as associate professor of philosophy and apologetics; director of the Institute for Christian Apologetics; and Greer-Heard Chair of Faith and Culture at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

It is a distinct honor and privilege to serve as the Guest Editor for this Fall 2024 edition of the *Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, which honors the legacy of Dr. Robert B. (Bob) Stewart. The recently-retired Dr. Stewart served for 26 years on the faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. For the last 13 years of his tenure, he was my trusted mentor and dear friend. Indeed, it is due to him that I have stepped into his former role at NOBTS. Bob's confidence in my ability to fill his shoes, while probably unwarranted, is a tremendous encouragement. One of Bob's gifts is his ability to see the best in others and to draw out the best in them. He saw leadership and scholarship potential in me that I did not see; but his affirmation has challenged me to become a better apologist and a better academician. I can only hope that I am able to build upon the legacy that he has left at NOBTS in the years to come.

When thinking through Dr. Stewart's legacy, two monumental achievements stand out: Defend and the Greer-Heard. The Spring 2024 issue of *JBTM* honored Bob's efforts in launching and building the annual Defend Apologetics Conference. This issue focuses on his unique brainchild: the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum, which ran from 2005 through 2017. The Greer-Heard Forum was Bob's baby, but it was made possible by the generous financial gifts bequeathed by William Heard Jr. and his wife Carolyn (nee Greer). Originally envisioned as a five-year pilot program, the Greer-Heard Forum instead saw 14 iterations. What was so unique about Bob's beloved Greer-Heard?

Contemporary American culture is increasingly polarized, and deep disagreements are rarely discussed, let alone discussed civilly and charitably. Instead, opponents tend to take pot-shots at one another on social media, to shout over one another, to demean anyone who dares to disagree, and/or to demonize people 'on the other side.' In an increasingly polarized and divided culture, Dr.

Stewart (with funding, support, and encouragement from Bill & Carolyn Heard) initiated a Forum which intentionally brought together leading scholars who had deep disagreements about significant issues, for a 24-hour exchange of ideas. The topics & participants of the 14 Greer-Heard Forums cover a wealth of significant issues, addressed by world-class thinkers:

2005: The Resurrection of Jesus (N. T. Wright and John Dominic Crossan)
2006: Intelligent Design (William Dembski and Michael Ruse)
2007: The Future of Atheism (Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett)
2008: The Textual Reliability of the New Testament (Daniel Wallace and Bart Ehrman)
2009: Pluralism: Can Only One Religion Be True? (Harold Netland and Paul Knitter)
2010: The Message of Jesus (Ben Witherington and John Dominic Crossan)
2011: Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus? (Craig Evans and Bart Ehrman)
2012: Is There Life After Death? (Gary Habermas and Michael Shermer)
2013: The Bible & Sex (Ben Witherington and Jennifer Wright Knust)
2014: God & Cosmology (William Lane Craig and Sean Carroll)
2015: Christians, the Environment, and Climate Change (E. Calvin Beisner and Bill McKibben)
2016: When Did Jesus Become God? (Michael Bird and Bart Ehrman)
2017: Christians, Jews, and Jesus (Ben Witherington and Amy-Jill Levine)
2017: The Meaning of the Atonement (N. T. Wright and Simon Gathercole)

Given Dr. Stewart's role at NOBTS, it will be no surprise that one "side" of each dialogue was a respected evangelical Christian. Dialogue partners for the Greer-Heard Forums ranged from atheists to more liberal/progressive Christians. Along with the two featured speakers each year, Dr. Stewart invited two or three sup-

porting scholars for each side of the dialogue: over the years, the combined speakers formed a veritable who's-who of biblical and religious scholarship in America and beyond.

The diverse collection of essays in this edition of the *JBTM* have three things in common. First, each is authored by a world-class scholar and Greer-Heard Forum contributor. Second, each is written in honor of Dr. Stewart's legacy: at NOBTS, through the Greer-Heard, and in the broader academy. Third, each is concerned with a major topic discussed at a Greer-Heard Forum: either reprising, reflecting upon, or expanding upon the original conversation.

In my estimation, the primary philosophical question is "Does God exist?" In 2007, Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett dialogued on "The Future of Atheism," exploring what coming decades might hold for Christianity, religion, and the (then-) New Atheism. McGrath reflects upon the intervening years, and points to numerous intellectual and sociological reasons for which Dennett's New Atheism has fallen into broad disfavor.

William Lane Craig is one of our generation's leading Christian apologists. He has debated prominent atheists on the existence of God for over four decades – including renowned physicist Sean Carroll at the 2014 Greer-Heard. In this article, Craig responds to a different objection to God's existence based on the perceived incompatibility between God's supposed freedom and His moral perfection.

Does scientific evidence support or contest Christian claims? That was the subject of not only the 2014 Craig-Carroll dialogue, but also the 2006 Greer-Heard Forum on Intelligent Design featuring William Dembski and Michael Ruse. In this article, Dembski provides a survey of how ID theory has fared in the years since his dialogue; he also provides personal reflections on his long-term relationship with the recently-deceased Ruse.

Another major intersection of science, philosophy, faith, and apologetics concerns the constitution of the human person. The 2010 Greer-Heard addressed the possibility of life after death, with a focused disagreement on the existence and nature of the human soul. J. P. Moreland was one of the primary respondents in the Habermas-Shermer dialogue, and he extends that conversation with a robust defense of body-soul dualism and life after death based on introspective self-awareness.

Jamie Dew explores the connection between anthropology and eschatology that lay at the heart of the Habermas-Shermer debate. Many theologians and philosophers hold views of human persons (anthropology) that are utterly betrayed by their views of life after death (eschatology). He suggests that, in the end (pardon the pun), we look to a thinker's eschatology if we desire to identify their true anthropology.

Several Greer-Heard Forums focused on the New Testament (2008), particularly the person (2011), message (2010), death (2017), and resurrection (2005) of Jesus of Nazareth. Craig Evans, who dialogued with Bart Ehrman on the question "Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?" re-examines the divine self-understanding of Jesus through a historical survey of the Qumran community and classical messianic figures (Theudas, the Egyptian, Alexander, and Fiskis). Evans argues that, in light of the divine messianic expectations of ancient Jews and the divine self-understanding of several relevant historical figures, biblical scholars should be more inclined to view Jesus's divine self-understanding as a legitimate historical possibility.

If one adopts a traditionally orthodox view of Jesus in the New Testament, questions remain regarding the relationship between Christianity and Judaism particularly (2017) and other religions more generally (2009). Harold Netland, an evangelical missiologist at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, participated in the 2009 Greer-Heard dialogue with Paul Knitter on the question of religious pluralism. In this volume, Netland extends that conversation into the contemporary intra-evangelical debate concerning "inreligionization" and "insider movements," wherein followers of Jesus adopt or maintain elements of other religions' beliefs, practices, and/or identities. Netland exhorts evangelical Christians to be more thoughtful and open in engaging issues surrounding pluralism and multiple religious identities, before concluding with a critical examination of Christian-Buddhist "inreligionization."

Even if religious pluralism is not a live option for contemporary evangelicals, one might opt for a broad inclusivism. Several evangelical scholars do just that, arguing that they find support for "pagan [or anonymous] Christians" in the posture and writings of early church fathers like Justin Martyr. In response, Tommy Doughty argues that Justin is *not* an inclusivist, and that his writings are misunderstood or misinterpreted when forced to support contemporary inclusivism.

The last article in this edition of the *JBTM* is a reflective essay by Dr. Robert B. Stewart. Bob looks back at 14 years of Greer-Heard Forums, sharing stories of how things came about, how things went, and lessons that he has learned along the way.

The Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum showcased charitable but critical dialogues between diverse scholars. Putting together the Greer-Heard was an incredible task which required a very specific set of skills and character traits. Bob Stewart exemplified at least three such virtues which enabled Greer-Heard to excel and which, in my estimation, are desperately needed in our polarized times.

Patience: How do we act when others have beliefs that differ from our own? Too often we shut our ears, close our eyes, and refuse to consider their positions. Bob invited scholars with opposing worldviews *onto his home turf*, patiently listened to them, and encouraged (forced?) us to do likewise. He also patiently and lovingly set forth his own views on the subjects, and encouraged interlocutors to patiently and charitably consider his position.

Hospitality: Bob didn't just invite "opposing" scholars to "do a talk" at NOBTS. He hosted them; he fed them; he loved on them; he treated them like royalty. To a person, scholars invited to participate in the Greer-Heard Forums, no matter how "skeptical" or "anti-Christian" they might be (or be *perceived* to be), report having been treated with grace and generosity. Our world could do with a great deal more inter-faith hospitality, which goes a long way to humanizing our "worldview foes" and transforming them into "friends with whom we disagree."

Precision: When you know that your words and beliefs are going to be set before leading scholars with a different perspective, you also know that you can't get away with sloppy reasoning. As a result, Bob exemplified careful scholarship: careful not to overstate his position or the support for it; careful to consider objections and alternatives. In a world of Trumpian overstatement and Harrisian obfuscation, we could all do with a little more Stewartian precision.

It was an honor to be present and involved in a handful of Greer-Heard Forums. It is a privilege to occupy Dr. Stewart's former position at NOBTS. It has been a pleasure editing this volume of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*, dedicated to Dr. Bob Stewart and the legacy of the Greer-Heard Point-

Counterpoint Forum. I pray that you are blessed by the essays herein!

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The 2007 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum: Whatever Happened to the New Atheism?

Alister E. McGrath, DPhil, DD, DLitt

Alister McGrath recently retired as Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford.

I have long been an admirer of the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum, which has done so much to encourage evangelicals to engage with debates and discussions in wider culture. Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Robert Stewart, fourteen conferences were held between 2005 and 2017 at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, serving two important functions for evangelical leaders and pastors. In the first place, it allowed them first-hand knowledge of potentially significant theological or cultural trends outside the evangelical community; in the second, it explored how evangelicals might respond to these developments with integrity, offering the evangelical community important resources for preaching, teaching, and ministry.

In February 2007, the Forum engaged a movement that had unexpectedly exploded onto the cultural scene the previous year. The "New Atheism" captured headlines throughout North America in 2006, as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris published bestsellers asserting the irrationality and propensity toward violence of religious belief. This was followed in 2007 by Christopher Hitchens's rhetorically turbocharged *God is Not Great*, which used ridicule and rhetoric where an older generation of atheists had preferred reasoned argumentation.[1] And it worked. Breezy slogans proved far more effective than carefully considered

[1] For the four works that are widely seen to have characterized this movement's argumentative and rhetorical approach, see Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006); Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007). Sam Harris's earlier work *The End of Faith* (2004) can be seen as anticipating some of the themes that dominated these later volumes, particularly their accentuation of the capacities of human reason: see Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004).

evidence. Those who believed in God were depicted as mad, bad or sad—and probably all three. For a while, these caricatures were seen as plausible accounts of the moral character and intellectual ability of religious people by those working in the secular media.

It seemed to many popular commentators that the place of religion in American culture was being called into question with unprecedented intensity. While academic critics of the New Atheism expressed concern at its simplistic take on complex scientific and theological issues, religiously alienated sections of the wider public welcomed and embraced its excoriating criticism of faith in modern American life and the godless vision of the future that it enunciated.[2] So what, many Christians wondered, could be done to engage its ideas and challenge its cultural influence?

Robert Stewart rose to the challenge. Daniel Dennett (1942–2024) and I had debated the themes of Dennett's "New Atheist" manifesto *Breaking the Spell* at the Royal Society of Arts in central London shortly after its publication in 2006. Dr Stewart invited us to reprise and extend our debate the following year in New Orleans, opening up an important discussion on the intellectual credibility and existential appeal of Christianity in a culture that was increasingly skeptical of its rational and moral credentials. While the headline event of the 2007 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum was a debate between myself and Dennett, this was ably supplemented by papers presented by William Lane Craig, Evan Fales, Hugh McCann, and Keith Parsons.[3] With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that some of the most important elements of the subsequent evangelical critiques of the New Atheism either emerged from this conference, or were consolidated by it.

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[2] For some excellent academic analyses, see Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Peter A. French and Howard K. Wettstein, eds, *The New Atheism and its Critics* (Boston: Wiley, 2013); Massimo Pigliucci, "New Atheism and the Scientistic Turn in the Atheism Movement," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2013): 142–53; Donovan Schaefer, "Blessed, Precious Mistakes: Deconstruction, Evolution, and New Atheism in America," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 76 (2014): 75–94; Christopher Cotter, Philip Quadrio and Jonathan Tuckett, eds., *New Atheism: Critical Perspectives and Contemporary Debates* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Verlag, 2017); John Gray, *Seven Types of Atheism* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

[3] Robert Stewart, ed., *The Future of Atheism: Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

The New Atheism: A Movement in Decline

In the last two decades, the New Atheism has imploded, leading to some vicious infighting within the scattered remnants of the movement over who was to blame for the fiasco of its collapse,[4] as well as thoughtful reflections from those who were initially drawn to the movement but subsequently became disillusioned with its overstatements, reductive simplifications, and evidential deficits.[5] The movement has lost its coherence and become fragmented and entangled with other aspects of America's constantly shifting cultural wars. The movement split into factions, unsure what had held it together in the first place and whether this had anything to say to a wider American culture. Those familiar with the intellectual issues were not surprised by its demise. Looking back on the meteoric rise of the New Atheism, the New Zealand blogger and cultural critic Giovanni Tiso wondered how "such a transparently flawed intellectual project" had managed to become so influential "for so long among so many?"[6]

The sidelining of the New Atheism within American public life since 2020 reflects two main developments— one cultural, the other intellectual—which diminished the plausibility of the movement. The cultural problem reflects the increasing retreat of what was left of the movement into a political niche or intellectual ghetto which lacked public appeal. This point is highlighted in Stephen LeDrew's perceptive analysis of the New Atheism, which notes parallels between this movement and various forms of religious fundamentalism. The New Atheism, he argues, is "a *secular fundamentalism* that is both a utopian ideology of scientism that defends the Western social order and a social movement aimed at

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[4] See, for example, two significant reflections on the tensions and inconsistencies within the movement: Jacob Hamburger, "What Was New Atheism? On Liberalism's Fading Faith," https://thepointmag.com/politics/what-was-new-atheism/; P. Z. Myers, "The Train Wreck that was the New Atheism," https://freethoughtblogs.com/pharyngula/2019/01/25/the-train-wreck-that-was-the-new-atheism/.

[5] For example, see the twelve narratives of disillusionment with the New Atheism and reconnection with Christianity set out in Alister E. McGrath and Denis Alexander, eds, *Coming to Faith through Dawkins: 12 Essays on the Pathway from New Atheism to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2023).

[6] Giovanni Tiso, "With Religious Fervour," *New Humanist*, 24 July 2019.

reinforcing the cultural authority of science and the advanced status of Western values."[7]

So what, according to LeDrew, is the intention of the New Atheism? If we can speak of a "New Atheist project," what might that be? For LeDrew, the fundamental issue concerns the acquisition and preservation of cultural power. "Its latent project is the universalisation of the ideology of scientism and the establishment of its cultural authority."[8] The New Atheism can be seen at one level as a defense "of modernity itself, which is perceived to be under threat by a swirling concoction of religious ignorance, epistemic relativism, identity politics, and cultural pluralism." Yet at a more sociological level, there is a gendered identity and objective; it manifests itself as "a defense of the position of the white middle–class male."[9]

LeDrew here puts his finger on an issue that disturbed many cultural observers at the time – the sociological particularity of the New Atheism movement, most of whose leading representatives were old, white, middle-class males.[10] The New Atheism's tendency to privilege the "white middle–class male," evident in the striking absence of women within the movement's leadership, was highlighted by the "Elevatorgate" incident of 2011, in which the feminist vlogger Rebecca Watson complained of being propositioned by a conference delegate in an elevator late at night during the World Atheist Convention in Dublin, Ireland. Richard Dawkins was dismissive of her complaint, precipitating a ferocious and highly divisive debate within the movement over whether New Atheism was simply the crystallization of the cultural prejudices

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[7] Stephen LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism: The Politics of a Modern Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 5 (my emphasis). On this point, see also Lawrence Wilde, "The Antinomies of Aggressive Atheism." *Contemporary Political Theory* 9 (2010): 266–83. My wife and I also emphasized the emergence of a new atheist "fundamentalism" in this movement: see Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (London: SPCK, 2007).

[8] LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism*, 2.

[9] LeDrew, *The Evolution of Atheism*, 2. For a critical analysis of this issue, see Ashley F. Miller, "The Non-Religious Patriarchy: Why losing Religion has not meant losing White Male Dominance," *CrossCurrents* 63 no. 2 (2013): 211–26.

[10] This trait was recognized and criticized at an early phase in the movement's development by Tina Beattie, *The New Atheists: The Twilight of Reason and the War on Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

and social norms of old white western males.[11] The scandal convinced many that the New Atheism was a gendered ideology that both originates from within and speaks to a specific privileged sociological niche.

Yet alongside these *cultural* difficulties, a significant *intellectual* problem began to emerge – namely, the argumentative and evidential inability on the part of New Atheist apologists such as Dawkins or Dennett to demonstrate that its core themes were true. At most, they led to agnosticism. And in the end, aggressive rhetoric was just not enough to move people from not being sure about God to being atheists. While the New Atheism presented itself as the intellectual antidote to religious delusions, its critics argued that it merely propagated a somewhat different delusion about the omnicompetence of reason and science, upon which its critique of religious belief ultimately depended.

Surprisingly, the New Atheism had relatively little impact on young people, tending to find its support among older white males. Why? It is important to recall that the New Atheism was ultimately a form of modernism, fixated on overambitious accounts of the epistemic reach of human reason and the natural sciences, which failed to engage religious issues, and ultimately led to the existentially arid deserts of rationalism and scientism. Significantly, this incorrigible modernism failed to connect with the postmodern anxieties of a younger generation in the United States, which considered the rationalist dichotomies of the New Atheism to be simplistic and reductionist. The New Atheists' failure to capture the imagination of a younger generation became a source of concern within the movement. New Atheist websites began to demonstrate anxiety about the diminishing impact of the movement, and the diminishing interest in the movement once its novelty had worn off and internal dissent became increasingly evident.

Within the New Atheism movement, some individuals expressed a more serious concern. They argued that it had started to exhibit the same patterns of thinking and behavior that Dawkins and Hitchens had previously criticized as typical of religious individuals and organizations. For P. Z. Myers, an influential atheist biologist and blogger at the University of Minnesota, allowing

[11] Caitlin Dickson, "Richard Dawkins Gets into a Comments War with Feminists," https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/07/richard-dawkins-draws-feminist-wrath-over-sexual-harassment-comments/352530/.

Dawkins and Hitchens to assume leadership roles within the movement led to the emergence of a "cult of personality" in which Dawkins and Hitchens were "turned into oracles whose dicta should not be questioned, and dissent would lead to being ostracized."[12] Had the New Atheism evolved into a new religious movement, with infallible prophets and authoritative texts that its followers were expected to blindly adhere to, despite their obvious errors, flaws, and exaggerated claims?

Much more could be said about the collapse of the movement that was prominently featured in the 2007 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum. Yet, an evangelical response to the implosion of the New Atheism must go beyond merely identifying its intellectual and spiritual shortcomings and documenting its cultural decline. We need to ask what can be learned from its rise and fall, aiming to understand the reasons for its initial success, not just its collapse. In the second part of this article, I shall explore some of the numerous themes that can be fruitfully examined.

Lessons Learned: Reflecting on the Rise and Fall of the New Atheism

What lessons can be learned, pastorally and apologetically, from the emergence and decline of the New Atheism? Can we develop theological and ministerial resources to assist congregations in addressing these issues? Although the New Atheism now lies in the past, it is clear that reflecting on how congregations and churches responded to its emergence, both initially in the heat of the media interest in the movement of 2006–7 and subsequently in the light of more considered reflection, may be helpful in dealing with such movements in the future. I shall consider a few of these lessons in what follows.

1. *Encourage individuals to read Christian works or engage in conversations with Christians, rather than relying solely on New Atheism sources and perspectives.*

One of the most intriguing aspects of the rise of the "New Atheism" was a resurgence of popular interest in discussing God. As the sociologist Tina Beattie remarked shortly after the publication of The God Delusion, it seemed that Dawkins had reawak-

[12] P. Z. Myers, "The Train Wreck that was the New Atheism," https://freethoughtblogs.com/pharyngula/2019/01/25/the-train-wreck-that-was-the-new-atheism/.

ened public interest in God "more effectively than any preacher could have done."[13] While the aggressive New Atheist critique of religion was accepted uncritically by some readers, others felt obligated to check things out, and so began to read (or read again) the New Testament or works by leading Christian writers, particularly C. S. Lewis.

Rather than trust Dawkins or Hitchens, many readers decided to read Christian works for themselves and found that they had been presented with a caricature of a rich and satisfying way of thinking and living that clearly merited closer and fairer consideration. The result of this assessment process was often a growing disillusionment with the shallow superficiality of New Atheist accounts of religious belief. In many cases, it also resulted in a rediscovery of the significance and vitality of Christianity. Richard Dawkins in particular appears to have become a conduit through which many have found their way to faith.[14]

This points to the importance of reaffirming or where necessary restating the Christian position, in the face of what is so often misunderstanding and misrepresentation. One of the lessons I learned as a younger man was that explanation is one of the most effective forms of apologetics. When engaging New Atheists, I regularly chided them for failing to get Christianity right. "Let me tell you what it really says …". The twelve testimonies and reflections of former Dawkins supporters in *Coming to Faith through Dawkins* are a powerful testimony to the impact of realizing that Dawkins's account of Christianity was not reliable.

2. *Don't be frightened by aggressive rhetoric and ridicule.*

Clearly, many in the secular media (and even some within the churches) initially believed that the assertiveness of the New Atheism reflected a genuine certainty about its beliefs, rooted in rational argument and evidence. In fact, it soon became clear that these were spurious "certainties," beliefs that were presented as if they were the self-evident and necessary views of intelligent people.

Gary Wolf, the journalist who coined the term "New Atheism" in 2006, was struck by the dogmatic tone of the trenchant certainties adopted by the leading advocates of this form of atheism. He noted that many ordinary people found these attitudes to be arro-

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[13] Beattie, *The New Atheists*, vii.

[14] For twelve fascinating accounts of this process, see McGrath and Alexander, eds, *Coming to Faith through Dawkins*.

gant and improbable, amounting to a significant intellectual overreach on their part. "People see a contradiction in its tone of certainty. Contemptuous of the faith of others, its proponents never doubt their own belief. They are fundamentalists."[15] There is ample evidence that this arrogance and overconfidence are seen as some of the most distasteful aspects of the New Atheism. Several contributors to *Coming to Faith through Dawkins* (2023) specifically mention this as one of the factors that made them reconsider their initial enthusiasm for Dawkins's New Atheist worldview and seek something more realistic and satisfactory.

3. *The arguments of the New Atheism lead at most to agnosticism.*

Dawkins's arguments are now widely considered to lead only to agnosticism, not atheism, reflecting a reluctant pragmatic judgement that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either believing that God exists or that God does not exist. The philosopher Anthony Kenny is an excellent example of a scholar to take this position:

> I do not myself know of any argument for the existence of God which I find convincing; in all of them I think I can find flaws. Equally, I do not know of any argument against the existence of God which is totally convincing; in the arguments I know against the existence of God I can equally find flaws. So that my own position on the existence of God is agnostic.[16]

More recently, the Australian atheist philosopher Graham Oppy went further, arguing that atheism, agnosticism, and theism are all "rationally permissible" in terms of their evidence base. Oppy defends his own preference (atheism) by arguing that this represents, in his view, the "best evaluation" of all the relevant factors, while conceding that his preferred conclusion is not intellectually compelling. The two other viewpoints were rationally permissible and needed to be treated with respect. "When we consider the best cases for atheism, agnosticism and theism, there are many, many points where we are required to make judgements; and it is the accumulation of those many, many judgements that feeds into

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[15] For a scholarly account of Wolf's point, see Christian Smith, *Atheist Overreach: What Atheism can't Deliver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 87–104.

[16] Anthony Kenny, *Faith and Reason* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 84–5.

our overall assessment."[17] Oppy's analysis makes it clear that the kind of simplistic rhetoric deployed by Dawkins is totally inadequate to overcome the evidential ambiguity that he is so clearly unwilling to confront or engage rigorously.

Dawkins thus finds himself in the difficult position of being unable to prove his own core beliefs, despite demanding that his religious opponents should prove theirs. He uses intellectual criteria to judge his opponent's positions which he fails to apply to his own. This epistemic asymmetry has left many potential fellow-travellers feeling uneasy, wondering whether Dawkins had even realized (for he certainly does not engage) the intellectual vulnerability of his own position.

In the light of these points, an important apologetic strategy emerges. We are entitled to insist that critics of Christianity—including the remnants of the "New Atheism"—apply the same criteria of proof and evaluation to their own beliefs that they use when criticising Christian beliefs. Dawkins demands that Christians prove their beliefs; so why does he not prove his own? Surely we are entitled to expect epistemic parity and argumentative fairness here? It is, after all, quite clear that Dawkins holds (and often depends upon) many beliefs, whether he recognizes this or not. He believes – and does not (and cannot) *know* – that there is no God. He can't evade this demand by pleading that he doesn't have any beliefs about God!

Dawkins is not on his own here. Christopher Hitchens seemed to think he inhabited a purely factual, belief-free world: "Our belief is not a belief."[18] Yet while Hitchens's *professed* world is a world of certainties, from which beliefs are excluded, his *actual* world is clearly a world of *belief*, in that his arguments and assertions are based on unacknowledged and unevidenced moral values (such as "religion is evil") which he is unable to prove – and hence tends to *assert verbally* rather than *defend evidentially*. Despite their bullying rhetoric, New Atheist writers such as Dawkins and Hitchens are unable to offer a compelling proof of their atheist beliefs.

These considerations do not, of course, prevent atheists or Christians from arguing that their belief systems can be justified evidentially or rationally; this is not, however, the same as being

[17] Graham Oppy, *Atheism and Agnosticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 63.

[18] Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*, 5.

able to prove that they are true.[19] Yet New Atheist writers seem reluctant to acknowledge the importance of this distinction, or its capacity to illuminate and inform discussions about the rationality of religious belief.

4. *We live in an uncertain world, in which faith plays a vital role.*

The New Atheism (or what is left of it) needs to be reminded of the epistemic realism of an earlier generation of atheist philosophers, so clearly displayed in Bertrand Russell's famous statement about the purpose of philosophy – to teach us "how to live without certainty, and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation."[20] Russell chose to live as if there was no God, knowing that he could not prove that this foundational belief lay beyond meaningful proof. He *believed* there is no God but could not prove this.

Similarly, the American atheist philosopher Crispin Sartwell declared that his atheism represented a bold decision to believe under "conditions of irremediable uncertainty," so that he had in effect "taken a leap of atheist faith."[21] Where Dawkins and Hitchens proclaimed a spurious certainty of atheist factuality, Sartwell insists that atheism entails a faith commitment, a belief in a specific *interpretation* of reality – an interpretation that cannot be proved to be right. "Religion at its best treats belief as a resolution in the face of doubt. I want an atheism that does the same, that displays epistemological courage."

The simple truth is that any belief about the existence or nature of God, any moral value, or any belief about the meaning of life cannot be proved – and hence is a belief. To be human is to *believe* – that is, to refuse to be confined to a limited and limiting world of facts and instead search for a larger vision of the world enfolding the good, the true, and the beautiful. As we noted earlier, beliefs can be *justified* – but not proved with the cold certainty of logic.[22] Yet, as Robert Stewart, C. S. Lewis and William Lane Craig make clear, we can offer excellent justifications of the rationality and vitality of the Christian faith, even if these fall short of the kind of conclusive proofs we can find in logic or mathematics.

5. *Benefit from the resurgence of evangelical apologetics since 2007.*

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[19] See, for example Juan Comesaña, *Justification, Evidence and Truth: Being Rational and Being Right.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[20] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: 1950), 2.

[21] Crispin Sartwell, "Irrational Atheism," *The Atlantic*, October 11, 2014.

[22] I explore the consequences of this point in Alister McGrath, *Why We Believe: Finding Meaning in Uncertain Times* (London: OneWorld, 2025).

The 2007 Greer–Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum brought together one of the leading representatives of the New Atheism and a group of its evangelical critics. This event encouraged the development and refinement of some significant evangelical criticisms of the New Atheism, along with robust intellectual defenses of theism, which have subsequently been picked up and developed at both the academic and pastoral levels. with some significant new approaches emerging in the aftermath of the rise of the "New Atheism" in 2006.

An excellent example is the influential apologetic approach of Timothy Keller, which offers both a response to the questions of secular culture, while at the same time challenging the idea of a self-evidently correct and neutral secularism.[23] Keller's *Reason for God* (2008) showed a deep awareness of the cultural fault lines of American culture following 9/11 and showed that it was possible to speak meaningfully about God in this context.[24]

Yet while Keller's achievement is rightly to be celebrated, it is important to appreciate that most churches and congregations were simply not equipped to cope with the high media profile and turbocharged rhetoric of the New Atheism on its initial appearance in 2006. With some honorable (but few) exceptions, little attention had been given around this time within evangelical churches or seminaries to apologetic issues – to equipping both ministers and congregation members to give good answers to the critical questions raised within a changing American culture.

We have learned an important lesson from this, as the increasingly high profile of apologetics in seminaries and the growth of national apologetics conferences indicate. Robert Stewart has played an important role in this development, both through the work of the Greer Heard forum and his role as general editor of the series *B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics*.

Apologetics needs to become a regular element of ministerial preparation and ongoing ministerial development, in order that congregations can be equipped and encouraged to engage the new challenges that will emerge in the future with confidence and

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[23] For an excellent study, see Collin Hansen, *Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023), 179–263.

[24] Hansen, *Timothy Keller*, 229–33. Note also Robert B. Stewart, "What Is Wrong with the New Atheism?" in *The City: Atheism* (Houston, TX: Houston Baptist University, 2015), 100–8.

without fear. We may not be able to predict what form those challenges may take, but we can certainly prepare for them by a deep immersion in the intellectual riches of the Christian faith and a willingness to engage and challenge them, while proposing Christianity as a viable alternative.

We live in an uncertain world; the Christian faith acknowledges this and allows us to find our way and flourish through trusting in a gracious God who accompanies us as we travel (Psalm 23). And as we travel, we need to prepare for the future, for what might lie round the next corner on the road of the life of faith. We need to prepare for situations we cannot yet imagine, and questions that have not yet been asked. By God's grace, this can be done!

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 205–16

Must God Choose the Best?

William Lane Craig, PhD, DTheol

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For 14 years, Bob Stewart organized Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forums, bringing together leading scholars from the evangelical and skeptical academy to dialogue on significant areas of disagreement. The Greer-Heard Forums demonstrated both Dr. Stewart's commitment to atheist-Christian conversation and his confidence in Christianity's ability to hold its own in the marketplace of ideas. Dr. William Lane Craig participated in several of these Forums, most memorably in the 2014 Greer-Heard debate on "God & Cosmology," interacting with the atheistic astronomer Sean Carroll in a vigorous and engaging exchange of ideas!

In honor of Dr. Stewart's Greer-Heard legacy of dialogue and academic excellence, Dr. Craig tackles a contemporary atheistic attack against the coherence of Christian theism.

Introduction

Christians believe that God is both free and morally perfect. But some contemporary philosophers have argued that God's freedom and God's moral perfection are logically incompatible and that therefore a logical incoherence exists at the very heart of traditional theism.[1] It would follow that God, as traditionally conceived, does not exist. Thus, addressing this challenge is of paramount importance.

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[1] William L. Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), as well as earlier publications; cf. Erik J. Wielenberg, "A Morally Unsurpassable God Must Create the Best," *Religious Studies* 40 (2004): 43-62; J. H. Sobel, *Logic and Theism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 470-73, both discussed by Bruce Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 85-89. See also Daniel Rubio, "God Meets Satan's Apple: The Paradox of Creation," *Philosophical Studies* 175 (2018): 2987–3004, who would escape the incoherence only by contending that "no world would be irrational or immoral for God to create. Even arbitrarily bad ones" (p. 2988).

Alleged Incoherence of Divine Freedom and Perfection

The objection takes the form of a dilemma for traditional theism: either there is a best possible world or there is not. If there is a best possible world, then God, being morally perfect, must choose it. But then God is not free to refrain from bringing about such a world. On the other hand, if there is no best possible world, then for any world that God might choose, there is always a better world that He could have chosen instead. But then it is possible for someone to be better than God is, since he could have chosen to bring about a better world than God did. Therefore, God is not morally perfect. Thus, we must reject either God's freedom or God's moral perfection.

We may formulate the basic objection as follows:[2]

1. Either there is a best possible world or there is an infinite hierarchy of ever better worlds.
2. If there is a best possible world, then God is not free to refrain from choosing that world.
3. If there is an infinite hierarchy of ever better worlds, then God is not perfectly good.
4. Therefore, either God is not free, or God is not perfectly good.

I think we may agree that denying God's freedom or perfect goodness is not a viable escape route and that therefore we must challenge the premises of the argument.[3]

But first, it will be helpful to clear up some ambiguity as to what is meant by a "possible world" in the context of this argument. Typically, by a possible world, one means a maximal state of affairs that is broadly logically possible. But in the context of this argument the term is used more restrictedly. It seems to me that the best candidates for God's choices are the different divine crea-

[2] Thomas Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* 1 (2008): 171.

[3] Against Senor, who thinks that when philosophers conclude that there is no God because they take themselves to have shown that no being could have one of the properties historically attributed to God, they are gaining a rhetorical advantage that they have not earned in the argument they have provided. For when theists understand "God" as a supernatural kind term, its intensional content is something like "the personal creator who revealed himself to the Hebrew people" (Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," pp. 172-73). The problem with Senor's claim is that, as we have seen, the God Who is revealed in Hebrew Scripture is revealed as perfectly good.

tive decrees that God might make, some of which are said to be better than others. One can compare the various decrees available to God in order to determine which, if any, decree is best.

Even so, an important ambiguity remains. In speaking of God's creative decree, we may be thinking either of the *content* of the decree, in which case we are referring to God's various options, or of God's *act* of decreeing, in which case we are referring to God's choice of an option. The distinction is important because the connection between the value of God's options and the value of His choices is crucial for the argument. So the force of (1) seems to be that in terms of God's options there is either a best decree that God could have made or else an infinite hierarchy of ever better decrees. Either horn of this dilemma is said to be unacceptable for the traditional theist.

The Best Possible World and Divine Freedom

It seems to me that the first horn of the dilemma is easily challenged. In response to (2), the theist may reject the claim that the necessity of God's choice is incompatible with its being free. It seems to be a widely accepted principle among philosophers that if a best option is available to an agent, then a perfectly rational and good agent will choose that option.[4] Many theists believe that if there is a best possible option available to God, then by virtue of His perfect goodness God will necessarily choose that option.

If we concede this principle for the sake of argument, the question remains whether God's necessarily choosing the best option is compatible with His freedom. It seems to me that it is. In the first place, there is no reason whatsoever to think that there is exactly one best decree that God might issue. There is very plausibly an indefinite range of decrees available to God which are equally good and unsurpassable.[5] In other words, there could be many

[4] For an extended argument see Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil,* §§ 4.2-8. Tucker, however, maintains that even if there is a best option and no countervailing considerations, God can choose less than the best (Chris Tucker, "Divine Satisficing and the Ethics of the Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 37/1 [2020]: 32–56).

[5] As Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," p. 189, argues, we can imagine value-neutral differences between possible worlds, say, different underlying "stuff." Hence, Senor thinks that if neither the thesis of a limitless hierarchy of ever better worlds nor the Incommensurability Thesis is true, it seems "very, very unlikely" that the thesis of a single best world is true (p. 188).

options tied for best. This fact is especially plausible in light of the fact that the range of options available to God are those which are feasible to Him in light of the true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom describing how free agents would act in any circumstances in which God might place them. Even if God must choose the best, He still enjoys enormous, perhaps unlimited, freedom to choose among various options.[6]

Moreover, and more importantly, God's freedom of choice is plausibly compatible with His choosing necessarily. Libertarian freedom does not entail the ability to do otherwise but rather the absence of external causal factors determining one's choice.[7] Just as God has the power to perform a sinful act but necessarily will not, so He has the power to bring about less than the best even if necessarily He will not in virtue of His perfect goodness. God's range of options being restricted by His perfect goodness is no more an inhibition of His freedom than of His power.

The objector might protest that we must then maintain with Leibniz that the actual world with all its evil and suffering is the best possible world, a conclusion that exposed Leibniz to ridicule.[8] But as Alvin Plantinga explains, Leibniz's failure to distinguish between broadly logically possible worlds and feasible worlds was precisely "Leibniz's Lapse."[9] When philosophers say that there is no best possible world, they are typically thinking of possible worlds in broadly logical terms. It is, indeed, plausible that there is no best possible world(s) in this sense. But if, as previously indicated, our concern is not with ranking broadly logically possible worlds but rather worlds feasible for God to decree, then it is less

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[6] Senor argues that a world in which God alone exists might well be one of the very good incommensurable worlds. Perhaps a world in which the only existent is a necessary, absolutely perfect being is incommensurable with a very good world which includes such a being but also causally dependent non-perfect entities. "So if there are two or more incommensurate, very good, creatable worlds, and one of those worlds is a world with only God, then God can be free (in the strong, libertarian sense) both with respect to creating at all and with respect to which world to create if God creates" (Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," p. 193). I see no reason to think that the decree of such a world could not be commensurable and among the best decrees God might make.

[7] See the classic paper by Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *Journal of Philosophy* 681 (1971): 5-20.

[8] Rowe, *Can God Be Free?,* pp. 132-33, n. 43.

[9] Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 180-84.

obvious that there is not a tier of best feasible worlds. Once we focus our attention on worlds feasible for God, it is far from clear that there are better worlds than the actual world which are feasible for God.

Thus, the theist need not be worried about the first horn of the dilemma.

No Best World and Divine Perfection

But suppose that there is no best feasible world that God might have chosen. Are we then cast onto the second horn of the dilemma, that there is an infinite hierarchy of ever better worlds that God might have decreed? Not at all, for the dilemma is, in fact, a false one.

Incommensurability Thesis

A good many philosophers have defended the plausibility of the Incommensurability Thesis, that possible worlds (or feasible worlds or divine decrees) might be incommensurable in their value and, hence, literally incomparable. Alexander Pruss identifies a number of factors that could contribute to such incommensurability, including a having mélange of moral and aesthetic values in worlds that makes it impossible to rank worlds in a single hierarchy.[10] Pruss' claim that various possible worlds are incommensurable in their overall value strikes me as extremely plausible. It does not preclude some worlds' being better than others; instead, it merely precludes a single, limitless hierarchy of ever better worlds. There could be multiple such hierarchies. I do not see how objectors can rule out the incommensurability of various feasible worlds, so as to maintain that if there is not a best feasible world there must be a single, infinite hierarchy of ever better worlds.

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[10] Alexander R. Pruss, "Divine Creative Freedom," *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* 7 (2017): 213–38. See also Zimmerman, "Resisting Rowe's No-Best-World Argument," pp. 453-60. Zimmerman reports that he has been unable to find conclusive reason to deny that, if God creates any contingent things, there will be a possible world in which what God creates is better, a modest conclusion that hardly sustains Rowe's burden of proof.

Infinite Hierarchy and Divine Perfection

But let us consider (3) on its own merits. This is the argument's most interesting and challenging premiss. If there is no best option, then God is logically required to choose an option knowing that there is a better. No matter which option He chooses, there is always a better option which He could have taken.[11] This fact is said to call into question God's perfection. The key assumption behind the argument is

> A If an omniscient being chooses an option when there is a better option that it could have chosen, then it is possible that there exists a being morally better than it.

Is (A) true?

Actions and Agents

This raises a question about two connections: first, what is the connection between the worth of an action and the worth of its consequences and, second, what is the connection between the worth of an agent and the worth of his actions? As Thomas Morris says, "Simply put, the idea seems to be that, all else equal, the better the product, the better the act; the better the act the better the agent."[12] Both of these connections are questionable.

Bruce Langtry would sever the supposedly necessary connection between the worth of an action and the worth of the consequences of that action. He argues that in every limitless hierarchy of creatable worlds there are infinitely many pairs of worlds *W* and *W** such that *W* is better than *W**, yet an omniscient being's creating *W* need not be a morally better action than his creating

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[11] I therefore do not understand why Rubio presents the creation problem as an example of a transfinite decision problem involving discontinuity in the limit (Rubio, "God Meets Satan's Apple," pp. 2992-93). In such cases every choice is dominated by another choice up to the limit, which is dominated by every other choice. For example, one may enjoy with increasing pleasure drinking a delicious wine arbitrarily close to the dregs, but if one drinks the dregs, then one experiences an unpleasant taste. In the case of creation it is not the case that God's options get better and better up to the limit but the limit is worse than all the others.

[12] Thomas Morris, "Perfection and Creation," in *Reasoned Faith*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 241.

*W**.[13] Thus, God's decreeing a better feasible world than another need not be a better action.

Morris, on the other hand, would sever the allegedly necessary connection between the goodness of an action and the goodness of the agent who performs it. He notes that agents who perform different acts of supererogation may be equally good even if one of their supererogatory acts is of greater value than that of another.[14] Morris denies "the inference that if God could have done better, God would have been better."[15] But without such an inference, the objection fails.

Critics like Langtry and Morris deny that it is inevitably a moral defect to fail to choose better than one does, when it is logically impossible to choose the best. The critics are committed to no stronger a claim than

> A Failing to choose better than one does is *necessarily* a defect only if choosing the best is possible for one to do.

That principle seems quite plausible. There are cases where failing to choose better than one does would be a defect, but not always. In claiming that it is impossible that God be morally perfect if He chooses an option than which there is a better, the objector must deny (B), the falsity of which is far from obvious. Therefore, despite the initial plausibility of (A), its plausibility drops dramatically when contextualized within a limitless hierarchy of ever better options.[16]

Satisficing

Fortunately for the Christian theologian, the issues raised by premise (3) overlap significantly with secular decision theory, which is a field of study exploring both normative and descriptive accounts of how decisions are rationally made. Decision theorists wrestling with the question of what a rational agent should do

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[13] Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil*, pp. 71-73.

[14] Morris, "Perfection and Creation," p. 241.

[15] Morris, "Perfection and Creation," p. 244. Morris, in effect, calls into question Langtry's (2a).

[16] As noted by Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," p. 177, following Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," *Faith and Philosophy* 19 (2002): 425-36. Senor thinks that "while Principle B is true if there is a best world (or worlds), if there is an infinity of increasingly good worlds, then this prima facie principle turns out to be false" (Senor, "Defending Divine Freedom," p. 179).

when faced with a hierarchy of ever better options point out that general principles of decision-making can be overridden in specific cases by countervailing considerations. For example, it would normally be better to choose a better option if such an option is available. But that general principle is subverted when one is confronted with a limitless hierarchy of ever better options.[17] Then one finds oneself in the admittedly uncomfortable situation of choosing an option even though one knows that a better option is always available. In the literature this is called "satisficing."[18]

Decision theory plausibly requires rational agents to satisfice when faced with a limitless hierarchy of ever better options. Suppose, for example, that a genie offers to prolong your life for any finite number of good days, to be chosen by you.[19] Someone might point out that for any number *n* that you might pick, you would be better off if you picked *n*+1 instead. What to do? Lang-

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[17] Similarly, Rubio's *prima facie* principle:

> NODOM: If there exists a strategy *A* that dominates some strategy *B*, then it is rationally impermissible to choose *B*.

is plausibly overridden by countervailing considerations like a limitless hierarchy of ever better options (Rubio, "God Meets Satan's Apple," p. 2991).

[18] Chris Tucker, "Satisficing and Motivated Submaximization (in the Philosophy of Religion)," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 93/1 (2016): 127-43, prefers to speak of submaximization and distinguishes between motivated and unmotivated submaximization. In motivated submaximization, one aims at as much of the good as one can get but chooses an option which is less than the best because one has countervailing considerations leading one to accept the good enough. In unmotivated submaximization, which Tucker identifies with satisficing, one chooses the good enough because one aims at the merely good enough. In Chris Tucker, "How to think about satisficing," *Philosophical Studies* 174 (2017):1366, Tucker acknowledges that "the labels here do not matter": we could as well speak of two sorts of satisficing, motivated and unmotivated. He notes that the typical defenders of satisficing, like Langtry, are defending motivated satisficing. Tucker observes that motivated satisficing is "widely endorsed and well defended" in the literature (p. 134); indeed, "there are few substantive philosophical positions that enjoy better support" than motivated satisficing (p. 128; cf. p. 130), Tucker opines that "since motivated submaximization is so popular and well supported in the mainstream literature, it's not a substantial cost of these [theistic] defenses that they appeal to the claim that motivated submaximization can be appropriate" (p. 138). Oddly, Tucker does not engage with Rowe's argument against a perfect being's satisficing out of countervailing considerations. In his "How to think about satisficing," Tucker defends the viability of even unmotivated satisficing.

[19] See Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil,* pp. 75-76.

try answers: "You should satisfice--that is, choose a number that will secure an outcome which is good enough. Indeed, you are rationally required to do so. Satisficing will lead to a better outcome for you than failing to satisfice."[20] To refuse to satisfice is inconsistent with the obvious truth that you should select some number, rather than walk away from the offer. In foregoing a better option, one exhibits no defect or lack in rationality.

The foregoing example concerns the *rationality* of satisficing. What about the *morality* of satisficing? If one satisfices, is one thereby morally less good than one might have been? Analogous situations suggest not. For example, Dean Zimmerman imagines the case of an ideal gambler whose bets are a function of his confidence in the outcome: the more confident he is, the more money he bets.[21] So imagine that someone is willing to bet him that 2+2 = 5. In this case he has to pick some finite amount of money to bet, knowing that he could always bet more. But his choice of a certain amount to bet is no expression of a lack of confidence in the outcome. Similarly God's choice of an option than which there is a better is not an indication of a lack of perfect goodness.

Even more analogous to God's case would be the case of an ideal philanthropist who can bestow any finite amount of money on his beneficiaries. The fact that he must pick some finite amount, always knowing that he could have picked a greater amount, is no infraction of his generosity. In the same way, God's choice of a good world to bring about is no detraction from His goodness, even though by the very nature of the case He could have chosen a better world instead. Thus, it is possible for even a morally perfect being to choose less than the best when the options are limitlessly ever better.

Langtry also provides an ethical variant of his thought experiment. Suppose that you are the guardian of a child and are morally obligated to act in that child's interests. The genie offers to prolong the child's life for any finite number of good days, to be chosen by you. What should you do? He says, "An argument similar to the one above leads to the conclusion that, morally speaking,

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[20] Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil*, p. 76.

[21] Zimmerman, "Resisting Rowe's No-Best-World Argument," pp. 462-65; cf. pp. 465-66 concerning an ideal traveler.

you should satisfice for the sake of the child."[22] A plausible decision theory will recommend that moral agents "select some good state of affairs even though they could select a better one."[23]

Langtry agrees that in order for a wise choice among options to be possible there must be standards of acceptability and guidelines for choosers. In Langtry's longevity illustration, for example, it would be irrational to choose just one year of prolonged life; rather we should choose a number which is high enough. But in such cases there comes point at which one is not morally better for picking *n+1* rather than *n* for the number of days. Any such number Langtry deems "admissible." Where is the "cut off" line?

Our answer will depend, says Langtry, on our assumptions about the values whereby our options are ranked. Are they such as to permit us to delineate options which are "good enough" from those that are not?[24] Langtry proposes that a world is good

[22] Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil,* p. 77. He points out that drawing the conclusion that there is no omniscient, perfectly good being provides no way out of the underlying ethical problem, which is equally raised by agents who are limited in knowledge, power, and goodness but are faced with an infinite hierarchy of ever better options.

[23] Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil*, p. 78.

[24] *Prima facie* Tucker appears to be addressing this question in his "Divine Satisficing and the Ethics of the Problem of Evil." But his notion of the "good enough" is not the same as the threshold of admissibility. On his account God has requiring reasons to create a world with what he calls "full creaturely goodness," but that requiring reason may be overcome by countervailing considerations. Now since being an option in a limitless hierarchy of ever better options is itself a countervailing consideration, it seems that no world is bad enough to be inadmissible. What Tucker here sets is merely a threshold at which God no longer has requiring reasons to select an option. But there seems to be no bottom, so to speak, to the hierarchy of creatable worlds.

In personal correspondence (Chris Tucker to William Lane Craig, December 9, 2021), Tucker floats three criteria of admissibility:

1. Eliminate any feasible world in which God would violate some deontic constraint to bring that world about, e.g., violate someone's rights.

2. Eliminate any world in which God would allow a creature to have less than full goodness without an adequate justification. If full goodness for free creatures requires beatitude, then (2) includes eliminating any world in which a free creature would fail to achieve beatitude without an adequate justification.

3. Any remaining feasible world is admissible.

Given DCT, I should be more inclined to speak of God's acting inconsistently with His love and justice than in violation of some deontic constraint. The question left open by (1) is how bad the salvific balance could get. (2) strikes me

enough if it is "non-disappointing" in the light of the values that underlie the ranking of worlds and, moreover, is abundantly better than those worlds that barely escape being disappointing.[25] This language can be misleading. In one sense a world in which even one sinner is lost is disappointing to God. But such a world may still be, in Chris Tucker's terminology, "choice worthy."[26] What is meant by "disappointing" in this context is "not choice worthy." "Worlds" that are not choice worthy will be so because they are inconsistent with God's nature as a perfectly just and loving being. Seen in this light, such options are not really possible worlds after all, since they are incompatible with God's nature and so not actualizable. There are, in fact, no worlds which are disappointing to God in this sense. Any world which is consistent with God's perfectly just and loving nature is acceptable and choice worthy.[27] If there are ever better feasible worlds, God may freely satisfice, for they are all good enough. Even the least valuable world compatible with God's perfect nature will be a very good world, and so God exhibits no defect in selecting it.

Daniel Rubio reminds us that we should be cautious about overturning plausible judgements with the theories that we construct. "If we find a formal theory that looks good, but does not cohere with our judgments about cases, we should look for an alternative theory that does so cohere. It should take a very powerful result, like an inability to find any coherent theory of value that affirms our judgment, before we abandon intuition at some formal

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as quite acceptable, except that I am inclined to think in term of persons rather than mere creatures.

[25] Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil*, p. 81.

[26] See Chris Tucker, "Divine Satisficing and the Ethics of the Problem of Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 37/1 (2020): 32–56. Langtry speaks of worlds that are not "flawed, deficient, or disappointing relative to the values that underlie the ranking of worlds" (Langtry, *God, the Best, and Evil,* p. 80).

[27] Thus we should reject Rubio's principle

> NO WORST: unless it is the only strategy available, if a is dominated by every other available strategy, then a is impermissible.

(Rubio, "God Meets Satan's Apple," p. 2994). Even if the consequences of rejecting (NO WORST) were adopting a "disunified, piecemeal approach" to ever better decision problems (p. 3002), that is a trivial price to pay compared to Rowe's alternative that a perfect being does not exist or Rubio's alternative that God's creation of a purely evil world is compatible with God's perfection.

theory's say-so. "[28] This seems to me precisely the case with the objection based upon the theoretical principle (A). It seems to me that the satisficing scenario concerning what a perfect being might indefectibly do, when faced with a choice among a limitless hierarchy of options, is very plausible and trumps principle (A).

Summary

Whether we adopt the position that there is a best of all feasible worlds or not, there is no good reason to infer that God's freedom and perfection are incompatible. If there is a best feasible world that God decrees, He does so freely, since He decrees as He does in the absence of external causally determining factors or irrational impulses. Moreover, given the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom with which He must work, the actual world might be, for all we know, the best world feasible for God. But even if there is no best feasible world, it is very plausible that God's available options are incommensurable, so that He is confronted neither with a best world nor an infinite hierarchy of ever better worlds. And even if He is confronted with such a single, ordered hierarchy, satisficing is a popular and well-defended strategy among decision theorists which God may adopt without sullying His moral character. The claim that an agent is morally imperfect because he chooses an option when he knows there is a better option is subverted by the presence of a limitless hierarchy of ever better options. By severing the necessary connection between the goodness of an option and the goodness of an action or, alternatively, between the goodness of an action and the goodness of an agent, we preserve God's goodness when choosing from a limitless hierarchy of ever better divine decrees.

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[28] Daniel Rubio, "In Defence of No Best World," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2019): 4-4.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 217–29

How to Debate Intelligent Design: The Example of Michael Ruse[1]

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In the spring of 2004, I received an email from Robert B. Stewart, or Bob as he signed his name. He informed me that a new forum had been created at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary—the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum—for the purpose of bringing together annually two key thinkers on some controversy significant to the Christian faith. The inaugural Greer-Heard forum, set for March 2005, was to feature John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright to debate the veracity of the New Testament—Crossan taking the skeptical side, Wright the traditional side. Bob inquired about my availability for the second such forum, whose focus was to be on intelligent design. Bob's proposed interlocutor for me was Richard Dawkins. I indicated my readiness to take part in such a debate. As it is, Dawkins said no, but in his place Bob managed to enlist Michael Ruse. I'm glad it was Michael.

Michael passed away just a few days ago (he died on November 1, 2024; I'm submitting this article November 5, 2024). With his passing, I feel more at liberty to write about his life and also our time at the Greer-Heard forum. It is to Bob's credit that this forum between Michael and me happened at all. It was scheduled for early in 2006 to take place at Bob's home institution, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). But intervening between the first Greer-Heard forum (featuring Crossan and Wright) and the one to take place between Michael and me was Hurricane Katrina. Anyone who remembers how furiously that hurricane pounded New Orleans in late August of 2005 will realize that holding the next Greer-Heard forum at NOBTS would have been unlikely at best, if not practically impossible. The entire

[1] This article draws extensively from my remembrance of Michael Ruse that appeared on my Substack column November 4, 2024: https://billdembski.substack.com/p/remembering-michael-ruse.

forum therefore needed to be transported elsewhere. Bob and his fellow faculty and staff at NOBTS thus moved the forum to a church in Georgia. They pulled off a logistical miracle, and I'm grateful to this day that they did.[2]

In the almost twenty years since the Greer-Heard forum between Michael and me, more has happened to advance intelligent design than to hinder it. Two steps forward, one step back. The *Dover v. Kitzmiller* trial had just been decided in December of 2005, ruling against intelligent design. So the forum between Michael and me occurred in the wake of that ruling. That said, Michael did not gloat at the forum about the hit that intelligent design took at that trial. We focused on the issues of intellectual merit regarding Darwinism and design, which were largely absent from discussion at the Dover trial, in which litigators were more concerned with scoring points than finding truth.

As it is, the Dover trial focused on a policy about using a particular textbook (*Of Pandas and People*) to promote intelligent design. All of the central players in the intelligent design community (centered at Seattle's Discovery Institute) urged the school board to rescind the policy: the policy itself was ill-conceived, and its enactment, by invoking Jesus Christ as savior, could only scuttle the policy at the hands of the ACLU when cast on the rocks of separation between church and state. But the school board, urged on by a public interest law firm (The Thomas More Law Center) intent on getting its first case to the U. S. Supreme Court, decided to ignore all wise counsel. And so their case crashed and burned, with the Dover school district ordered to pay $1 million in legal costs to the ACLU even though Thomas More took no fee. After the trial, many on the Darwinian side pretended that this case had once and for all shown that intelligent design was bogus. It did nothing of the sort, and it is to Michael's credit that at our Greer-Heard forum he rejected this pretense.

The Dover trial forced the intelligent design movement to forgo easy victories through legal and political means, and instead to redouble its efforts to develop intelligent design as a bona fide science with better evidence, better explanatory power, and better theoretical insight than its naturalistic competitors (notably Dar-

[2] The original Greer-Heard website was at http://greer-heard.com. The forum with Michael and me still has a record at the Web Archive: https://web.archive.org/web/20060616155823/http://www.greer-heard.com.

winism). This made life more challenging for many of us at the forefront of intelligent design research. People like to associate themselves with winners, and the Dover trial caused many to jump ship. Recruiting talent and supporters to the intelligent design movement thus became more difficult, but we persevered.

Those who remained took up the mantle, and in subsequent years the intelligent design movement has seen tremendous progress. We now have an extensive cross-disciplinary list of peer-reviewed publications that argue effectively in support of intelligent design.[3] Internationally, intelligent design is growing by leaps and bounds.[4] Most importantly, the scientific research program advancing intelligent design is intellectually vital, constantly offering new insights and ideas.[5] My own most recent contribution to this work was the 2023 publication of a massively revised and expanded second edition of *The Design Inference*,[6] first published in 1998 with Cambridge University Press, and now with a co-author, computer scientist Winston Ewert.

Even though I could expand at length on the conceptual progress that intelligent design has made in the years since the Greer-Heard forum between Michael and me, I want instead in this article to focus on the sociology of the intelligent design debate, especially as exemplified in Michael's handling of this debate. Michael was a good egg. He and I could not be more diametrically at odds on the question of biological origins. He was a thorough-going atheistic Darwinist. I'm a thorough-going old-earth creationist who sees in intelligent design a science that provides a window into divine action and that decisively refutes Darwinism. And yet, Michael embodied the classical liberal value of freedom of thought and expression, insisting that everyone has a right to a seat at the table of rational discourse, and that there is no place for shouting down or ridiculing others because they disagree with you.

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[3] See https://www.discovery.org/id/peer-review/.

[4] Consider Brazil, whose society for intelligent design has an open door in the Brazilian academic world and holds a large annual intelligent design conference: https://www.tdibrasil.com/5-tdi-brasil-sp-2024/.

[5] For real-time updates on intelligent design's progress, see Discovery Institute's Evolution News forum, https://evolutionnews.org/, and relatedly its forum on natural and artificial intelligence, https://mindmatters.ai.

[6] William A. Dembski and Winston Ewert, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance Through Small Probabilities*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2023).

I first met Michael in the spring of 1992 at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Jon Buell, who headed the Foundation for Thought and Ethics, along with two other ministries—Dallas Christian Leadership and the C.S. Lewis Fellowship—had put together a symposium at SMU. As with the Greer-Heard forum, they enlisted two scholars taking opposite positions, in this case Phillip Johnson and Michael Ruse, to debate the merits of Darwinism and intelligent design. Phil had just released *Darwin on Trial*, a book that forcefully reopened questions about Darwinism that had never been adequately answered.[7]

At the symposium, he and Michael gave keynote presentations. Then they faced each other in a formal debate. We had a panel, too, with four or five other voices on each side of the divide (Darwin v. design), who took turns weighing in. At that symposium, I was introduced to thinkers who would soon become fixtures in the intelligent design movement—Michael Behe, Stephen Meyer, and Walter Bradley. Somewhere, there might still be a grainy video of the symposium. The Foundation for Thought and Ethics published a proceedings volume of this symposium, available to this day on Amazon: *Darwinism: Science or Philosophy?*[8]

The parallel with the Greer-Heard forum here is eerie. The debate between a Darwinist (in both cases Michael) and an intelligent design proponent (Phil at SMU, me at Greer-Heard); the enlisting of others to comment on the debate (give Robert Stewart credit for enlisting at Greer-Heard such luminaries as William Lane Craig, John Polkinghorne, and John Lennox); the subsequent publication of a record of the event—by Jon Buell with the Foundation for Thought and Ethics of the SMU symposium, by Robert Stewart with NOBTS and published under the title *Intelligent Design—William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse in Dialogue*;[9] and of course, the role of Michael Ruse in both these events.

When I first met Michael in 1992, I wasn't sure what to make of him. That said, I wasn't sure what to make of Phil Johnson at our first meeting either, which likewise occurred at that same symposium—*A lawyer taking on biological evolution, really?* Both would

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[7] Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

[8] Jon Buell and Virginia Hearn, eds., *Darwinism: Science or Philosophy?* (Dallas: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 1994).

[9] Robert B. Stewart, ed., *Intelligent Design: William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

become friends. And both are now sadly gone.[10] At the Dallas meeting, Michael struck me as full of himself but also as not taking himself too seriously. He was refreshingly assertive, as when someone in the audience asked him a gotcha question to try to make him look foolish. He wasn't having it and called him out. Looking back, if I had to pick one word to capture Michael throughout our friendship, it would be *exuberance*. He embraced life and people with spirit and gusto, never holding back.

The funniest incident I recall with Michael occurred at our Greer-Heard forum in Georgia in February of 2006. At our forum, Michael made a remark that I found hilarious. But first, some context. Our exchange at the forum took place around the time that the New Atheists, as they came to be called, started picking up steam. Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* would be published later that year. But Dawkins' full throttle assault against theism and his case for atheism were already before the public consciousness. In particular, Dawkins' two-part documentary on behalf of atheism had just been released January of 2006, the first part titled *The God Delusion*, the second part titled *The Virus of Faith*, all under the umbrella of *The Root of All Evil?*[11]

In any case, Michael wanted nothing to do with the harsh atheism of Dawkins and his fellow horsemen of the atheistic apocalypse, as they also came to be called (Christopher Hitchens of *God Is Not Great*, Daniel Dennett of *Breaking the Spell*, and Sam Harris of *The End of Faith*). That said, it would be inaccurate to characterize Michael as trying to reconcile science and religion, except in a way that made religion subservient to science—and a fully naturalistic science at that. In his book *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?* he wrote:

> Even the supreme miracle of the resurrection requires no law-breaking return from the dead. One can think Jesus in a trance, or more likely that he really was physically dead but

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[10] For my remembrance of Phillip Johnson, see "Phillip E. Johnson (1940–2019): Some Reflections" at https://billdembski.com/personal/phillip-johnson-1940-2019-some-reflections/.

[11] For *The God Delusion* video, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nAos1M-_Ts. For *The Virus of Faith* video, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzjYuFhcBKM. Note that I found the first of these videos especially useful in teaching apologetics courses at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. It remains of apologetic interest to this day.

> that on and from the third day a group of people, hitherto downcast, were filled with great joy and hope. That a psychologist or sociologist might be able to explain all of this by natural laws is totally irrelevant — something of a relief, actually. What counts is that it happened and that it was unexpected and that it mattered. Conjuring tricks are beside the point. It is from this regeneration of spirit that true Christianity stems, not from some law-defying physiological reversals in the early hours of a Sunday morning.[12]

Any but the least traditional Christians would find this dismissal of a real bodily resurrection of Jesus as unacceptable and irreconcilable with Christian orthodoxy. And yet, where Dawkins saw only delusion, Michael still saw something of value, even if the resurrection of Jesus could not be grounded factually.[13] Unlike Dawkins, whose childhood experiences with Christianity were quite negative, Michael came from a Quaker background that he regarded as positive, and which I always sensed he still at some level wanted to be true. Michael therefore reacted viscerally against the stark atheism of Dawkins, who saw Christianity's wholesale destruction as an unmitigated good for humanity.[14] The

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[12] Michael Ruse, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 96.

[13] Interestingly, in our day we find Jordan Peterson taking such an archetypal or narratival view of Christianity's main claims, seeing value in them even if they are not factually true. In a dialogue between him and Richard Dawkins moderated by Alex O'Conner (https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=8wBtFNj_o5k), Peterson addresses the challenge raised by Dawkins regarding the factual truth of key Christian claims, such as the resurrection, miracles, and virgin birth. Peterson does not directly affirm or deny these claims as literal truths. Instead, he frames his response within a broader context of myth, narrative, and the archetypal significance of such stories. Like Ruse, Peterson suggests that the New Testament stories carry deeper meanings, emphasizing that even if these events didn't literally happen, their symbolic and psychological meaning remains profound. While Dawkins remains focused on the factual, scientific truth of these stories, Ruse and Peterson emphasize narratival dimensions of these stories, making a case for the utility and deep psychological truth they may embody, regardless of their historical or scientific accuracy.

[14] Ironically, Dawkins, who of late has increasingly felt the barbs of wokism, has softened his attitude toward Christianity, even now calling himself a "cultural Christian." Apparently, the philosophical realism typically associated with Christian theism has for him become more congenial than the postmodernist anti-realism associated with woke lunacy. See my Substack column where I ex-

following paragraph from Michael's Wikipedia entry perfectly captures his reaction to the new atheists:

> Ruse has engaged in heated exchanges with new atheists. According to Ruse in 2009, "Richard Dawkins, in his best selling *The God Delusion*, likens me to Neville Chamberlain, the pusillanimous appeaser of Hitler at Munich. Jerry Coyne reviewed one of my books (*Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*) using the Orwellian quote that only an intellectual could believe the nonsense I believe in. And non-stop blogger P. Z. Myers has referred to me as a 'clueless gobshite.'" Ruse said new atheists do the side of science a "grave disservice," a "disservice to scholarship," and that "Dawkins in *The God Delusion* would fail any introductory philosophy or religion course," and that *The God Delusion* makes him "ashamed to be an atheist." Ruse concluded, saying "I am proud to be the focus of the invective of the new atheists. They are a bloody disaster."[15]

With all this stage-setting, let's finally get to the funniest incident I recall with Michael. At the Greer-Heard forum in February 2006, the topic of heaven came up, a heaven of eternal bliss compatible with theism and incompatible with atheism. Far from denigrating heaven, Michael proclaimed, "I would love for heaven to be real." He then described his ideal version of heaven: "Heaven for me would be a new Mozart opera every night and fish-and-chips during intermission." This was pure Michael! And yet it contained valuable truth. As it is, at our last time speaking together, which occurred on a podcast interview with Subboor Ahmad in early 2024, Michael indicated that he was going that night to a Mozart opera.[16] He wasn't going to miss it even though he was breathing oxygen with a nasal cannula during the interview and would need additional oxygen the night of the opera.

Sure, Michael's vision of heaven is amusing. Yet it is closer to truth than many of us might imagine. In theologian Thomas Dubay's *The Evidential Power of Beauty* (a book I've used to good effect in a graduate seminar on theology and science), Dubay also

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amine Dawkins' turn to cultural Christianity: https://billdembski.substack.com/p/the-enabling-of-richard-dawkins.

[15] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Ruse#Early_life_and_career.

[16] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESl0trFr5AM.

sings the praises of Mozart as a window into the divine.[17] While it may be hard to imagine that any activity could be continued for all eternity without engendering boredom, the appreciation of beauty—an endless progression of ever-increasing visions of beauty—seems immune to heaven's widely advertised "boredom problem." In his humor, Michael therefore also made a profound point.

In the lead-up to our Greer-Heard encounter, Michael and I found our paths often intersecting. Intelligent design, especially pre-Dover, was a hot topic on college campuses, and I would regularly debate Michael on this topic (during that period, I also did multiple debates with well-known skeptic Michael Shermer). In the spring of 2005, Michael and I also debated intelligent design on ABC Night Line, hosted with George Stephanopoulos. And then there was our collection titled *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* that we co-edited, which appeared with Cambridge University Press in 2004. This book featured Darwinists, intelligent design theorists, theistic evolutionists, and self-organizational theorists, allowing each side in the debate to put their strongest foot forward.[18]

The incident with Michael that made the greatest impression on me, and which showed me the depth and kindness of his humanity, occurred at the University of Central Arkansas in the fall of 2003. It was a symposium featuring the two of us, so we had to make presentations and respond to each other. But we also had lots of interactions with students, especially students from the honors college. At the opening dinner, about thirty honors students were seated at tables in a plush hall. Before the dinner was served, Michael went to each student individually and shook hands, asking with genuine interest about each of them. It was heartwarming.

Though Michael liked to have fun, he had a serious side and he was an ardent defender of academic freedom and expression. In the last months before his death, he and I were trying to complete one last project on the controversy between Darwinism and intelligent design. I sensed that this might be his swan song—his usual energy on past projects was not there and it largely fell to me to

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[17] Thomas Dubay, *The Evidential Power of Beauty: Science and Theology Meet* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

[18] William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse, eds., *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

try to pull it all together. In any case, for this project we needed to enlist several Darwinists. I expected with Michael's extensive rolodex and with himself being a Darwinist that enlisting the needed Darwinists would be easy. It wasn't. In fact, it met stiff resistance.

To see what I mean, I'll share an email exchange that Michael had with a prominent Darwinian biologist as he was trying to enlist this biologist to our project. Michael forwarded the exchange to me but asked that I not circulate it. With his passing, however, I no longer feel the need to keep this exchange strictly confidential. Notwithstanding, I won't disclose the identity of the biologist in question. My point is not to embarrass anyone. Rather, my point is to underscore how freedom of thought and expression in the academy are regularly suppressed, and that it takes the courage of a Michael Ruse to stand against such suppression.

Here's how the biologist in question responded to a request to contribute to our project. In the interest of keeping the precise nature of the project as well as the biologist in question confidential, I've made a few excisions, clearly marking them with brackets and ellipses:

=====Begin email from biologist to Michael, dated August 17, 2024=====

Dear Michael,

I hope this finds you well.

[Your assistant] wrote me to ask for a contribution to what he said was a project planned by you and William Dembski…

I was curious about the scope of this project, so I wrote to inquire to a set of people who were involved in the Dover trial. These included [omit names of seven prominent opponents of intelligent design]. [All these] who participated in the trial … were dismayed, to say the least.

They individually expressed a range of reasons why this would be a terrible idea.

— There is nothing new, either scientifically (there never was) or polemically with respect to ID in the past 20 years.

— The original proponents of ID have mostly either scattered to the winds or have labored in quasi-academic obscurity. (I will not characterize Dembski's abstract mathematical work of the past decades, other than to offer the view that they have nothing to say about evolution or science.) There still has never been a peer-

reviewed scientific publication by an ID proponent. No one could think of "new" issues or aspects of ID that have emerged. What is the definition of a dead horse?

— We live in a far greater era of disinformation and fakery than we lived in 20 years ago. If ID was a "Trojan horse" and a construct of smoke and mirrors then, how much easier will it be to gull a substantial portion of the populace now? How will this help the cause of science and science education — or even, if you want to assume your philosopher's mantle, the cause of explaining legitimate philosophy?

— In Dover and in other districts, conservative Christians are determined to relitigate the ID battle. They are using the same tactics of bringing in persuasive lawyers, soliciting school board members, and launching advertising campaigns to voters. They are also assaulting textbooks. Ken Miller's biology text was criticized in Texas for chapters that dealt with Covid-19 (which was alleged by critics not to be a disease), vaccinations, and the absence of a balanced treatment of ID with evolution. How will your planned publication help with this, apart from helping the ID proponents claim that scientists are taking them seriously?

— One of our colleagues remarked: "since 2004, when *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* first appeared, Dembski has repeatedly evinced inappropriate behavior — failing to address pertinent criticism, refusing to admit error, insulting his opponents, etc. — that should make anyone leery about participating in an ostensibly scholarly enterprise with him. After twenty years (or more) of not playing nicely with others, he can hardly expect eager cooperation at this stage." As another pointed out, your past collaborations with Dembski have allowed him to pose as a mainstream academic, which some regard as a debatable claim. Setting aside any abstract mathematical contributions, on which I do not comment, he has no relevance to any inquiry about evolution or science in general.

— The Discovery Institute and its friends would like nothing better than the academic legitimacy that you would collude with in … this pseudo-debate. This may not matter to you, because you may feel that open discussion is of general interest to the public and salutary to its understanding of issues central to human endeavor. If so, that view seems short-sighted. We who sacrificed years of effort to explain, test, and ultimately counter the pretensions of ID as science, which was instantiated in Judge Jones's

142-page decision in which not a single sentence validated any of the arguments of the ID proponents, will not thank you for giving comfort to these opponents of science and rational thought, even as their legal and administrative minions redouble their efforts to overturn everything that we accomplished.

Please abandon this project, if for no other reason than for the sake of respect for your colleagues who sacrificed a great deal — professionally, personally, and financially, in some cases — to defend science.

Thanks for your consideration, and hope you are well.

[signature omitted]

=====End email from biologist to Michael, dated August 17, 2024=====

What follows next is Michael's response. For context, Michael was a key expert witness in the 1981 Arkansas creation trial (*McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*).[19] He cites his involvement with that case at the end of his email below, noting that for him it too incurred a professional cost. As becomes clear here, Michael perceived the cost to himself as no less than that to any of the Darwinists who participated as expert witnesses in the Dover trial (*Dover v. Kitzmiller*), which was decided in 2005.[20] These are the same Darwinists who in the previous email were said to be wringing their hands at the prospect that Michael and I would be collaborating on a project that might give credence to intelligent design. Note that the abbreviation IDT stands for intelligent design theory. Here, then, is Michael's response:

=====Begin response from Michael to biologist, dated August 17, 2024=====

Goodness — I don't think I have ever been solicited/begged by a letter such as yours — I am not a sociologist so I cannot report on the fate of IDT today — new conceptual changes, number of enthusiasts and so forth — what I can say is that a year ago I flew to Krakow in Poland to debate Michael Behe — there were

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[19] See https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/529/1255/2354824/.

[20] See https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp2/400/707/2414073/.

about three hundred in the audience — at least half of whom were either priests or nuns — I estimate there were about five in the audience who agreed with me! I didn't take offence — nothing personal — philosophers don't take offence at different conceptual issues — I am not a Thomist, but I have deep respect for St Thomas as a theologian/philosopher.

I guess that is why I am not inclined to accede to your earnest pleading — if I were a scientist, it would be one thing — but I am a philosopher and I think it is a moral obligation to take on Dembski and the ideas he endorses/promotes — there are important issues here about the science-religion relationship and it is legitimate for a science to admit to the influence of religion — Dawkins would obviously say "no" — I am not at all sure that [Theodosius] Dobzhansky or [Ronald] Fisher would agree — our [project has yet to be completed] , but if I were still teaching — I am 84 and now retired after 55 years in the classroom (in the job beyond my dreams) — I would use it as the focus of a graduate seminar on the science and religion interface — more than teaching it, I would want to take it for credit!

And that I guess is why you are glad not to be a philosopher and why I could never be other than a philosopher.

Michael

"Please abandon this project, if for no other reason than for the sake of respect for your colleagues who sacrificed a great deal — professionally, personally, and financially, in some cases — to defend science."

With respect, I am a little offended that the contributions of others are considered pertinent whereas my contributions (and costs) go unmentioned — if you look at the volume I published after Arkansas — *But is it Science?* — just see what my fellow philosophers like Larry Laudan said about me — obviously they did not deter me then and they do not deter me now.

=====End response from Michael to biologist, dated August 17, 2024=====

This exchange, of course, raises many questions about the legitimacy of intelligent design as an intellectual and scientific position. Addressing such questions is for another day and time—I would urge readers with such questions to start by consulting the second

edition of *The Design inference*, which I co-authored with Winston Ewert, and which is cited earlier in this article.

But let me close this article with the following thought: If intelligent design is an intellectually credible, and possibly even correct, view of biological origins, how could we ever know that if it is suppressed in the way that this biologist urged Michael to abandon his project with me? Michael and I differed sharply on the merits and truth of intelligent design. But he was a valiant defender of freedom of thought and expression, letting inquiry proceed where it will and following evidence to its ultimate destination—however distasteful that terminus might be to some.

So let me end by commending Michael for his rock-ribbed support of freedom of thought and expression, and also by commending Robert Stewart, his team at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and the donors who endowed the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum to give voice to debates that are too often suppressed but that need to happen for the health of the Church and for the benefit of the wider culture.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 231–45

Life after Death, Substance Dualism, and the Argument from Self-Awareness

J. P. Moreland, PhD

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A while ago, *Time* magazine featured an article defending stem-cell research on human embryos: "These [embryos] are microscopic groupings of a few differentiated cells. There is nothing human about them, except potential--and, if you choose to believe it, a soul."[1] This expresses a widely held opinion that when it comes to belief in the soul, you're on your own. There is no evidence one way or another. You must choose arbitrarily or, perhaps, on the basis of private feelings what you believe about the soul. For many, belief in the soul is like belief in ghosts: an issue best left to the pages of the *National Inquirer*.

Regardless of how often this mantra is recited, nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, a considerable case can be offered for the view that consciousness and the soul are immaterial, not physical realities. Thinking through these is a fascinating adventure of considerable importance. French philosopher Blaise Pascal rightly remarked that the soul's existence is so important that one must have lost all feeling not to care about the issue. Moreover, Christians have a special interest in the soul's nature since this is so central to the Christian faith and its teaching about life after death. For at least three reasons, the case for the immaterial nature of consciousness and the soul is relevant to the reality of life after death.

First, the Bible seems to teach that consciousness and the soul are immaterial. For twenty centuries, most educated and uneducated Christians understood the Bible in this way. The historic Christian position is nicely stated by H. D. Lewis: "Throughout the centuries Christians have believed that each human person consists in a soul and body; that the soul survived the death of the

[1] Michael Kinsley, "If You Believe Embryos Are Humans…" *Time* (June 25, 2001), 80.

body; and that its future life will be immortal."[2] If these teachings are wrong, this would undermine the epistemic authority of the Bible, especially in the area of life after death which the Bible regularly associates with disembodied, spiritual existence after death, followed by the resurrection of the body in which absolute personal identity is sustained.[3]

Second, while the existence of immaterial consciousness and the soul are neither necessary nor sufficient for the reality of life after death, the latter is clearly much more at home in a world where the former exist. The probability of life after death, given immaterial consciousness and the soul is higher than the probability of life after death, given physicalism.

Third, as I have argued extensively elsewhere, if consciousness or the soul exist and are immaterial, there will be no scientific explanation for their coming-to-be or the regular correlation between mental and physical states.[4] If your creation story starts with "In the beginning, there were brute, physical particles," then you will not be able to explain the existence of mental entities or their regular correlation with physical entities. You can't get something from nothing, in this case, mind from matter, so if you start with matter and simply rearrange it according to natural law, you will end up with increasingly complex arrangements of brute matter. But consciousness will not come to be.

As atheist philosopher Paul Churchland acknowledges:

> The important point about the standard evolutionary story is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a purely physical process . . . If this is the correct account of our origins, then there seems neither need, nor room, to fit any nonphysical substances or prop-

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[2] H. D. Lewis, *Christian Theism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 125. For a defense of a dualist understanding of biblical teaching, see J. Moreland, Scott Rae, *Body and Soul* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), chapter one; John Cooper, *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, updated edition, 2000).

[3] See John Cooper *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, rev. ed., 2000); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

[4] See J.Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God* (N. Y.: Routledge: 2008); *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

erties into our theoretical account of ourselves. We are creatures of matter. And we should learn to live with that fact.[5]

Given the hard problem of consciousness and the legitimacy of emergentist questions, the widespread appeal to emergence to explain these facts about consciousness (and the soul) is otiose because "emergence" is just a name for the problem to be solved and not a solution in its own right. Moreover, mental entities and the aforementioned correlations furnish evidence of a First Being who is Himself mental, thereby providing grounds for belief in God. In this way, theistic arguments for life after death are on the table. Life after death is more probable, given theism, than it is, given naturalism.

Throughout history, most people have been substance and property dualists. Thus, regarding the mind/body problem, Jaegwon Kim's concession seems right: "We commonly think that we, as persons, have a mental and bodily dimension . . . Something like this dualism of personhood, I believe, is common lore shared across most cultures and religious traditions."[6] And regarding issues in personal identity, Frank Jackson acknowledges, "I take it that our folk conception of personal identity is Cartesian in character—in particular, we regard the question of whether I will be tortured tomorrow as separable from the question of whether someone with *any* amount of continuity—psychological, bodily, neurophysiological, and so on and so forth—with me today will be tortured."[7]

People don't have to be taught to be dualists like they must if they are to be physicalists. Indeed, little children are naturally dualists. Summing up research in developmental psychology, Henry Wellman states that "young children are dualists: knowledgeable of mental states and entities as ontologically different from physical objects and real [non-imaginary] events."[8] This statement is

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[5] Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 21.

[6] Jaegwon Kim, "Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism," in *Soul, Body and Survival*, 30.

[7] Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1998), 45.

[8] Henry Wellman, *The Child's Theory of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1990), 50. I owe this reference to Stewart Goetz and Mark Baker.

representative of a large number of studies that conclude that we are "natural born Cartesians."[9]

It seems to me that there are two tasks for any adequate philosophy of mind: (1) Articulate one's position and explain why dualism is the commonsense view; this is called the Hard Metaproblem of Consciousness and the Self according to which if physicalism is true, then why is everyone for centuries and in every culture (including little children) a substance dualist?[10] (2) Defend one's position. I believe that there is an argument that simultaneously satisfies both desiderata in a non-*ad-hoc* way and, thus, the argument can claim the virtue of theoretical simplicity in its favor. In what follows, I shall present the argument and defend its most crucial premise, and respond to two criticisms that have been raised against it.

The Simple Argument

Stewart Goetz has advanced the following type of argument for the non-physical nature of the self, which I have modified:[11]

(1) I am essentially an indivisible, simple spiritual substance.

(2) Any physical body is essentially a divisible or complex entity (any physical body has spatial extension or separable parts).

(3) Principle of Indiscernibility of Identicals

(4) Therefore, I am not identical with my (or any) physical body.

The premise most likely to come into dispute is (1), and I will offer a defense of it shortly. Here, I want to make a few brief comments about (2), especially the role that extension and separable parts play in it, along with the associated notion of simplicity in (1). Part/whole relations are important for treatments of substances, and there are two kinds of parts relevant to our discussion—separable and inseparable (aka modes). Setting aside properties, there are two ways something can be simple in the sense

[9] For documentation of this claim, see See Brandon Rickabaugh and J. Moreland, *The Substance of Consciousness: A Comprehensive Defense of Contemporary Substance Dualism* (Hobgoblin, N. J.: Wiley Blackwell, 2023), 85–92.

[10] Ibid., 84–92.

[11] Stewart Goetz, "Modal Dualism: A Critique," in *Soul, Body & Survival* ed. by Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 89.

relevant to our discussion: by being uncomposed of separable parts or by being metaphysically indivisible. I use "metaphysically indivisible" to mean what many philosophers say by "indivisible in thought." Something could be metaphysically divisible but not physically divisible (if, say, such division annihilated the whole), but not conversely. Moreover, all particulars that are metaphysically indivisible are uncomposed, but not conversely (a continuously extended whole with no separable parts could still be divided). According to our usage, a substance with inseparable parts is simple.

Any relevant entity to which I am identical on a physicalist view is (most likely to be) composed of separable parts (e.g., the living body, brain, or a standard sub-region of the brain) or (less likely) at least divisible parts (a physical simple if such there be).[12]

I want to advance two arguments for premise (1). Both arguments support the claim that we are directly aware of ourselves as indivisible, simple spiritual substances. Here is the first one. It often happens in science that a range of apparently unrelated data can be unified if a theoretical entity is postulated as that which is causally responsible for that range. The postulation of electrons unified a wide range of phenomena by depicting them as effects of the electron's causal powers.

Sometimes a range of apparently unrelated items of knowledge can be unified if one has knowledge by acquaintance with some relevant object. For example, there are many things I know about a certain spatial region R in the philosophy classroom in which I usually lecture. For example, I know that everyone walks around R and not through it. R is rectangular in shape, about four feet tall and two feet in width and breadth. R does not contain metal in it, R contains something that is darker than yellow, if a book is placed near the top of R it will hover in stable suspension off the floor. I know all these things. But rather than being a set of isolated pieces of knowledge, there is a unifying pattern to them. Indeed, I know each of them in virtue of knowledge by acquaintance

[12] It might be objected that in the history of science, there have been coherent conceptions of matter according to which matter is not extended. I am thinking of the penetrable, unextended point particles of Boscovich. Critics of Boscovich claimed that his position amounted to "the immateriality of matter," and that his point particles fit more naturally into a Berkeleyian ontology than a materialist one.

of the podium that overlaps R. It is on the basis of that acquaintance that I know the items in question.

There are many apparently unrelated items of knowledge people commonsensically have of themselves. At the very least, these are strong intuitions that are widely embraced (sometimes expressed in the first person). I shall call them dualist seemings:

1. I am an indivisible, uncomposed thing that cannot exist in degrees. If I lose, say, half of my body or brain, I am not thereby half of a person. I am an all or nothing kind of thing—either I am present or I am not. In some brain operations and cases of Dandy Walker Syndrome, well over half of the brain is absent. But while the person may lose functioning, we have strong intuitions that a whole person is present.
2. Pairs of people are not themselves conscious subjects of experience. Siamese twins involve two, not three subjects of experience. When two people shake hands, a new subject of experience does not come-to-be. We are inclined to think that the reason for this is that subjects of experience cannot be composites. Thus, pairs or larger groups of anything—conscious or unconscious—in whatever relational structure cannot be a conscious subject of experience. My knowledge of this fact is a species of the following genus: For any x and y, the union of x and y is not itself a thinker. I know this because it is directly evident to me that an object composed of separable parts lacks the sort of simple unity necessary for a conscious, thinking being.
3. At any given time, my mental states are deeply unified: it is not that my visual field is continuous and non-gappy; rather, my visual field is one and belongs to me; my thoughts, sensations, and so forth are all united into a single stream of consciousness and belong to me. We are inclined to think that what unifies my mental states is that they all belong to the same, simple subject of experience, namely, to me. Moreover, I have no difficulty in determining which mental states are mine. Indeed, I am directly aware of 1) my mental states; 2) of their belonging to me; and 3) of their being "inside" of me.
4. I have strong intuitions about two things: (1) My mental (fundamental, highest-order) powers/capacities lie within me and are essential to my identity. (2) Thought strictly en-

tails a thinker or, more generally, mental states strictly entail a mental subject. Just as there could not be an instance of motion without a mover, there could not be an instance of a mental property without a mental subject. These commonsense intuitions justify the philosophical intuition that mental properties are kind-defining properties whose instances are substances constituted by those properties.[13] Just as the instantiation of being an electron is a substance constituted by that property as its essence, so the instantiation of mental properties form a spiritual substance constituted by those mental properties. Thus, just as being an electron is an internal constituent inhering in an electron, so mental properties are internal constituents inhering in me. And just as the instantiation of being an electron strictly entails an electron, so the instantiation of mental properties strictly entails a mental substance.

5. As I walk towards my kitchen, I have strong intuitions that I am the same self that lives through and owns each successive sense experience of the kitchen. In the middle of the sequence, I have strong intuitions of having had earlier experiences, of currently having a particular experience, and of being about to have an anticipated experience.
6. I have strong intuitions that psychological criteria of personal identity in terms of memories, character and personality traits are neither necessary nor sufficient for my identity through change. Others could satisfy these criteria and not be I, and I could fail to satisfy them and still be I. Also, I have strong intuitions that various causal chain analyses proffered to address problems with psychological criteria are (1) still neither necessary nor sufficient for personal identity and (2) part of a dialectic involving stepwise causal-chain analyses, counterexamples, new analyses, new counterexamples, and so forth that is guided by a concept of the self as a simple, spiritual substance (see the Jackson quote above). And I have strong intuitions that appeal to immanent causation actually presuppose sameness of the self over time and, thus, cannot constitute it.
7. I have strong intuitions that I and my body (and each of its proper parts, including the brain) have different persistence

[13] Cf. E. J. Lowe, *The Four-Category Ontology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

conditions. My intuitions tell me that body switch cases are entirely (metaphysically) possible. That is why their presence in science fiction does not cause most people to protest on the grounds that such scenarios are not (metaphysically) possible.

8. I have strong intuitions that (1) Near Death cases are clearly (metaphysically) possible and (2) whether or not they are real is a function of the eyewitness (and related) evidence, and not a function of the laws of physics/chemistry or how thing go regarding the survival of my brain and body.[14]
9. I am aware of having epistemic immediacy (proprioception) with respect to my entire body. And when appropriately informed by philosophical theology, I am strongly inclined to think that I occupy my body as God occupies space, namely, by being fully present at each point throughout my body. Among other things, this is why I do not become 80% of a person when my arms are cut off—I am fully present at each point in the remaining locations of my body.

These intuitions are ubiquitous and very hard to give up. This is so because they express how things phenomenologically seem or appear to us. Not only are we directly aware of our mental states, but we are also directly aware of our selves. It is in virtue of our direct awareness of ourselves as simple, spiritual substances that we have these intuitions.

My purpose here is not to provide philosophical arguments for the intuitions expressed in (i)-(ix).[15] Rather, I claim that direct awareness of the self as just stated adequately explains the ubiquity of these intuitions and what unifies them. It is easy to satisfy oneself about this by re-reading (i)-(ix) while keeping in mind the basic notion of such self-awareness. Again, we have these intuitions because it phenomenologically seems to us that we are certain sorts of things—simple, spiritual substances—in acts of direct self-awareness. Note carefully, that we do not epistemically or psychologically start with an intuition of contingency of the link

[14] For two sources that provide credible documentation of the evidence of Near Death Experiences for dualist disembodiment, see Edward F. Kelly, Emily Williams Kelley, et al., *Irreducible Mind* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 367–421; Jeffrey Long (with Paul Perry), *Evidence of the Afterlife* (N. Y.: HarperCollins, 2010).

[15] For some of those arguments, see Part II of Robert C. Koons, George Bealer, eds., *The Waning of Materialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

between my self and the relevant physical particular (or mental state), and, on that basis, believe in non-identity. Rather, we are directly aware of non-identity and, on that basis, believe in contingency.

Moreover, the intuitions in (i)-(ix) are easily unified if they are grounded in a direct awareness of the self as a simple, spiritual substance, and they are hard to unify and justify otherwise.[16]

If we have a direct awareness of ourselves as simple, spiritual substances, then we have (1) a strong defense of dualism, (2) a solid account of why we have the intuitions above by unifying them around direct awareness of the self, rather than leaving them as a disparate set of isolated intuitions, and (3) a good explanation for why dualism is the commonsense view, namely, it expresses what people the world over know to be true based on their awareness of themselves.

Some may reply that there are introspectively attentive people who do not have these intuitions.[17] But this is surely a strained reply. The overwhelming majority of people now and throughout history have held the intuitions listed above. And at the beginning of this article, I noted that many, perhaps most, physicalists have these intuitions, at least pre-philosophically. And in my view, the usual reason for rejecting these intuitions is a question-begging, prior commitment to physicalism according to which these intuitions *must* be set aside (e.g., eliminated or reduced).

Others may retort that dualism is the commonsense view due to religious indoctrination and teaching the world over. This retort has never carried much weight with me for two reasons. For one thing, little children and secular people have the intuitions listed above quite independently of religious teaching, and we need an

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[16] My basic argument centers on explaining why we have such intuitions and providing a unification of them. Thus, my argument is independent of debates about epistemic foundationalism. However, on a non-doxastic, internalist version of foundationalism, the following principle seems correct: $(x)(y)(s)(E_xxy \rightarrow Jxs)$ where x ranges over intuitions, y over propositions, and s over seeming states. E_x is "is expressed propositionally as" and J is "is *prima facie* justified by." Thus, for all intuitions x, propositions y and seeming states s, if x is expressed propositionally as y, then x is *prima facie* justified by seeming state s. Intuitions expressed in the form of propositions are epistemically justified by phenomenological seemings or appearings.

[17] Cf. Nancey Murphy, "A Nonreductive Physicalist Response," in *In Search of the Soul*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 67.

explanation for why this is the case. Self-awareness provides such an explanation. For another, I think this retort gets the cart before the horse: religious teachings are acceptable to people around the world because they capture what people already know about themselves due to self-awareness; it is not the other way around.

So much for the first argument that we are directly aware of ourselves as indivisible, simple spiritual substances. The argument supports two claims: that we are directly aware of ourselves and that the entity of which we are directly aware is an indivisible, simple spiritual substance. Some rebut this argument by claiming that we do not, in fact, have direct awareness of ourselves. So, my second argument supports such direct awareness. Consider the following proposition which we may call the Causal-Acquaintance principle:

$$(CA)\ \mathcal{L}(s)(x)(y)(K_a sx \rightarrow K_a sy)$$

where s ranges over knowing subjects, x ranges over causal facts, e.g., a hammer's causing a nail to move, and y ranges over the associated causal objects that constitute their causal facts (e.g., the hammer). K_a is "has knowledge by acquaintance with." CA says that necessarily, if a subject s has knowledge by acquaintance with a causal fact x, then s has knowledge by acquaintance with the relevant causal object y. For example, if s is directly aware of a hammer's causing a nail to move, then s is directly aware of the hammer. CA seems to account for a wide range of cases and is highly justified.

Now, there is a difference between active and passive thoughts. A passive thought is one that happens to me as a patient when I am, say, listening to someone talk. By contrast, an active thought is one that I exercise active power with respect to and entertain freely as an agent. We are quite capable of knowing the difference between active and passive thoughts, but we do not vouchsafe such knowledge by gaining further knowledge about the causal pedigree of the two types of states, as a compatibilist would have it. No, we are directly acquainted with the difference and can be aware of it by simply attending to the relevant mental states. Take as a causal fact my causing an active thought. It would seem to satisfy the antecedent of CA. If so, then it follows that I have knowledge by acquaintance with myself.

A Response to Two Counterarguments

Nancey Murphy has advanced the following:[18] Our most basic intuitions about ourselves are dependent on the language we have learned. More specifically, a common source of our philosophical dualist intuitions is the language we speak, and this language is derived from past and present theories about the way things are. Indeed, dualist theories that shape our intuitions come from the distant past according to Murphy, e.g., ancient attempts to provide for the just distribution of rewards and punishments in the afterlife, given that they are not so distributed in this life; attempts by Greek philosophers to use the concept of the soul to explain things such as the difference between living and nonliving things. Thus, what basic beliefs one has in any given era, including dualist intuitions expressed propositionally, may well be artifacts of one's linguistic resources.

An adequate response to Murphy would require a discussion of the merits of non-Cartesian foundationalism, the autonomy and authority of philosophy relative to science, the reality of simple seeing, and the relationship between language and experience/thought. Clearly, such a discussion cannot be undertaken here.[19] However, it may be useful to state our differences. I am a non-Cartesian foundationalist of a certain sort—I hold to the authority and autonomy of first philosophy (and do so for reasons independent of my commitment to foundationalism), I believe there is simple seeing in which we have direct access to intentional objects, and that experience and thought are temporally and epistemically prior to language. Thus, while language may affect intuitions, the latter are not dependent upon the former, and nowhere is this more evident than in self-awareness in which we have direct, linguistic-independent (and concept-independent) access to our own selves on the basis of which we form, retain and justify our

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[18] Nancey Murphy, "A Nonreductive Physicalist Response," 66–7.

[19] Cf. My "Is Foundationalism Passe? An Analysis of Post-Conservative Epistemology," co-authored with Garry DeWeese, in *Constructing a Center: Evangelical Accommodation in a Post-Theological Era*, ed. by Justin Taylor, Millard Erickson, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 81–107; J. Moreland, "A Christian Perspective on the Impact of Modern Science on Philosophy of Mind," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55 (March 2003): 2–12.

dualist intuitions. Murphy would not agree with me on these matters, and that is where our basic differences lie.

Besides this identification of our differences, the following brief remarks are in order. Dualist intuitions are not primarily philosophical; they are commonsensical. Moreover, I believe that Murphy's account of the origin of these intuitions has it backward. People didn't come up with the idea of the soul as a part of their theorizing about the world; their theorizing about the world employed and extended what they already pre-theoretically (and prelinguistically) knew. Consider Murphy's mention of the idea that people theorized another life as a place where punishments and rewards are justly distributed. Where in the world did these people come up with the idea that they were the sorts of things that could survive in an afterlife? Where did the very idea of an afterlife come from, and why was it so widely believed to be disembodied? In my view, people's notion of an afterlife was already justified as a possibility because of the considerations in the Simple Argument (e.g., from self-awareness people knew they were not identical to and capable of independent existence from their bodies), and those considerations were subsequently pressed into service, not the other way around.

Here is a second counterargument against my thesis: Where I appeal to positive, direct awareness of the self, critics will appeal to a failure to be aware of substantive complexity (a failure to be aware of separable parts). Moreover, they will likely point out that this failure-to-be-aware better explains why so many secular philosophers (e.g., materialists like Jackson, Nagel) who accept most or all of (i)-(ix) are not dualists. Why aren't these thinkers dualists, if they accept most or all of (i)-(ix)? The critics can go on to say that my claim to be aware of substantive simplicity doesn't provide any explanation for why these scholars are not dualists. Indeed, if I am correct, these people should be dualists because they too have direct acquaintance with substantive simplicity.

I have three things to say in response. First, these physicalists lack the second-order belief that they have the first-order awareness of themselves as simple spiritual substances because they are looking for the wrong sort of experience constitutive of that first-order awareness. Phenomenologically, if a philosopher claims to have a direct awareness of some entity, another philosopher can always claim not to have that awareness. When G. E. Moore claimed to have a direct intuition of goodness, his rivals simply

denied they had the same intuition. A defender of Moore could respond in this way: Goodness is a second-order property like being colored or being shaped, not a first-order property like pleasure, being red, or being triangular. Now intuitions of these sorts of first-order properties have a certain texture or vivacity that is absent in the case of intuitions of the corresponding second-order properties. Those who failed to have the relevant intuition of goodness were looking for the sort of intuitive texture appropriate to intuition of a first-order property and they never found it. Unfortunately, they were looking for the wrong sort of phenomenology. Once an intuition of goodness is compared to the intuition of other second-order properties, it becomes more plausible to think that the relevant intuition is real.

Now, something like this is going on with respect to the direct awareness of the content of propositional attitudes, e.g., thoughts and beliefs. Just as we have the ability to grasp by intuitive direct awareness the nature of a pain (and other so-called states of phenomenal consciousness), so we have the ability to grasp directly the introspectively available nature of the conceptual and propositional contents that constitute our thoughts, beliefs and so forth. Jaegwon Kim disputes this claim and argues that, in fact, a kind of belief content, e.g., that George Washington was the first president of the United States, does not have a uniform, qualitatively introspectable character present in all instances of that kind.[20] However, Kim seems to be guilty of a Humean vivacity test for a phenomenal quale (e.g., a conceptual content) according to which one has such a quale only if it is a vivid sensation like a pain or an image of George Washington. But in this case, Kim's belief about this matter is based on looking for the wrong sort of first-order awareness. He mistakenly seems to think that if a direct awareness of the content of a thought fails to have the sort of vividness of a sensation such as a pain, then there is no such awareness. Just because the introspective texture of a thought's content is not as viv-

[20] Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2d ed, 2006), 208–10. Paul Churchland goes so far as to argue this same point with respect to mental states like pain that are clearly categorized as states of phenomenal consciousness. See Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1984), 52–3. Unfortunately, Churchland fails to see that painfulness is a second order property, not a first-order one, and as such, it characterizes various kinds of pain that differ phenomenologically with respect to their species and not their genus.

id as that of a pain does not entail that we do not have the former. Those who think otherwise are looking for the wrong sort of awareness.

Now, in my view, something like this is going on with respect to the positive first-order awareness of the self. People who reject such awareness on the grounds that they simply do not find that they have it are looking for something like a sensation of pain or some other vivid mental state. But an awareness of the self is not like that and this is one reason why people mistakenly believe that they do not have the awareness.

My second response to this counterargument rests on the notion that while intuitions, construed as a way things seem phenomenologically to a subject, are harder to change than beliefs, beliefs can cause someone to reject an intuition. This can occur when an intuition whose corresponding belief is prima facie justified to a subject on the basis of that intuition is overridden by a weightier belief. Thus, while dualist intuitions in (i)-(ix)—and dualism itself--receive prima facie justification from the relevant more basic intuition, namely, the self appearing phenomenologically to the subject as a simple spiritual substance, physicalists do not take themselves to have the more basic intuition because of what they think is an overriding defeater. What is that overriding belief? In the context of debates about property dualism regarding qualia, Kim says the following:

> The [property-dualist] case against qualia supervenience therefore is not conclusive, though it is quite substantial. Are there, then, considerations in favor of qualia supervenience? It would seem that the only positive considerations are broad metaphysical ones that might very well be accused of begging the question.[21]

Kim goes on to say that these broad metaphysical considerations amount to the assumption that physicalism must be true. He also claims, correctly in my view, that the corresponding dualist intuitions are not based on a prior commitment to property dualism but, rather, provide justification for property dualism. I believe that the same sort of question-begging prior commitment to physicalism funds the rejection of direct awareness of the self as a simple spiritual substance. To avoid the charge of begging the

[21] Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2d. ed., 2006), 233.

question, the physicalist must find independent reasons for physicalism sufficient to override what we seem to be aware of in first-person introspection. In my view, the philosophical arguments for physicalism are surprisingly weak. And, in any case, physicalists usually rest their case on the supposed findings of science. However, I have argued in another place that the scientific issues actually have little or no bearing on topics in philosophy of mind.[22]

Here's my third response: Elsewhere, I have shown that people like Thomas Nagel have come clean and acknowledged that they desire that God not exist due to what is called the Cosmic Authority problem (basically, a desire not to have to answer to God).[23] Similarly, I believe it is true that they desire that the soul not exist and this desire gives them reason to deny what they are directly acquainted with in introspection of the self. While this is anecdotal, I once heard one of the leading physicalists of the last fifty years respond to a question about whether or not there was a soul. He retorted that physicalism was true, there was no soul, and this fact brought him great relief because he no longer needed to worry about judgment in an afterlife and could, accordingly, live his life any way he wanted. I believe that this sort of desire is more responsible for the widespread acceptance of physicalism and the associated rejection of direct awareness of the self than philosophers want to admit.

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[22] See J. Moreland, "A Christian Perspective on the Impact of Modern Science on Philosophy of Mind," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55 (March 2003): 2–12.

[23] J. Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God* (N. Y.: Routledge, 2008), chapter 9.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 247–55

Death as a Litmus Test for Theological Anthropology

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For the past ten years or so, theological and philosophical anthropology has been a major field of debate and contention within the broader theological world. Several factors seem to be driving this: (1) Continued work and discovery in neuroscience and psychology, (2) contemporary emphasis in Christology and its relationship to anthropology, (3) the tsunami of cultural attention given to sexuality and gender, and (4) the growing realization that what we say human persons are dictates much of what we can say in ethics, counseling, and about life after death. Importantly, much of the theological world has settled on a view of human persons that they would describe as "holistic." But as we will see, while this common theme may give the impression of consensus, there is still a tremendous amount of ambiguity on what it actually means to be holistic.

As such, in this article I will argue two things. First, I will argue that the common practice in theological discourse of describing a view as "holistic" is unhelpful and not descriptive in the way that we would need it to be. To do this, I will flesh out how the term "holistic" is employed in radically different ways by different schools of thought. Second, I will argue that no matter what a person says their view is, what he says happens to a person at death is the real indicator of their actual ontology of human persons.

What Does It Mean to be "Holistic"?

Before we jump in, a little background may be in order. Years ago, I stepped into the field of theological and philosophical anthropology largely due to interests in the possibility of life after death. I was pastoring a small country church in North Carolina—doing lots of funerals and thus constantly thinking about death—and had just finished a PhD at Southeastern Seminary in theological studies. While I loved my previous field of science and theolo-

gy, the many funerals I performed brought death to the front of my mind and I found myself consumed with all the big metaphysical questions about life after death. Looking for helpful apologetic arguments to defend the existence of an immaterial soul, I was shocked to find that so many theologians and Christian philosophers had abandoned the various forms of dualism in favor of physicalism. But they didn't just abandon it, they vehemently opposed it. A little bothered by this discovery, I thrust myself further into the debates until I eventually decided it was time to do a second PhD in the philosophy of mind at the University of Birmingham, UK, under the supervision of Yujin Nagasawa.

Initially at the beginning of this journey, my interests were exclusively in the philosophy of mind, and I held, rather strongly I might add, a substance dualist view of human persons. Yet over time, two things happened. First, my interests broadened a bit to include important metaphysical questions related to personal identity, persistence conditions, as well as questions in philosophy of religion related to the resurrection of the dead. Second, I was gradually persuaded by my theologian friends to abandon substance dualism in favor of a holistic account of human persons that was much more preferable biblically and historically. That is, upon further investigation, I saw that most Christian accounts throughout history argued that bodies and souls were distinct entities from each other, but that the human person was a composition of the two together.

Persuaded of such, I began exploring various theologians to find someone who might provide a theological framework to adopt and work from. While I would eventually settle on Aquinas, my explorations took me through many thinkers, and I was surprised by what I found. First, it seemed that many who claimed to have a holistic account really didn't. And second, I found that whatever many of them said about their holistic accounts in their treatment of anthropology, they often contradicted themselves when they spoke of death. Commonly, theologians will reject substance dualism in favor of holism while describing their anthropology, only to have their account collapse back down into substance dualism (or something very much like it) when they deal with death and the intermediate state (I will deal with this matter in the next section). Further, I also found that "holism" is a slippery concept that can be applied to everything from substance dualism to physicalism. For brevity's sake, I will only speak in

general terms about what we find in the literature, not exegeting any particular thinker for each example. I only offer here the common ways that the concept of "holism" is employed. I'll mention four examples: holism as materialism, holism as functionalism, holism as psychosomatic unities, and holism as hylomorphism.

Holism as Materialism

For some, being holistic is really just a veiled form of materialism. On this view, human persons are integrated beings that possess material bodies as well as mental faculties, properties, and personal experiences. Nancey Murphy, for example, describes here "holistic" account as "Multi-Aspect Monism". She says:

> So 'multi-aspect monism,' as I use the term, means that humans, in this life and the next are wholistic beings, with capacities for heart-felt yearnings, emotions, and passions; for rationality; and for entering into relationships, the most important of which is with God. They are also capable of attachment to kin, and to material possessions; and the embodiment that makes fellowship with others possible. In this life, our embodiment is physical, but we shall be transformed, and we can have no literal knowledge of the 'stuff' of the transformed body.[1]

What they explicitly deny, however, is the idea that human beings have two substances or parts, and that a soul is a different metaphysical thing than a body. These philosophers and theologians have been some of the strongest critics of dualism in general, and substance dualism in particular. They also put considerable stock in the natural sciences, the work of modern neuroscience, and the theological insight from church history that most theologians thought of human persons in holistic terms.

Yet, what this approach amounts to is a materialist view that merely acknowledges the obvious fact that we have mental faculties and experiences. This inclusion of mental faculties and experiences does little for the view, as virtually no view of human persons denies this. The question is not whether we have such mental properties and experiences. The question, rather, is what is it that grounds these mental faculties and experiences? Is it a brain or an immaterial soul/spirit? This approach misses the actual question at

[1] Nancey Murphey, "Multi-Aspect Monism and Resurrection of the Body", in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 67.1 (2024): 136.

hand and is really not a holistic account at all, it is just materialism. But more importantly for the purposes of this article, it offers a considerably different way of understanding the term "holism" from what I'll describe below.

Holism as Functionalism

Even some substances dualists use the term "holistic" to describe their view. Unlike the materialist above, these thinkers make a genuine attempt to be holistic in their anthropology, but ground their holism in the function of the human being. They affirm that bodies and souls are distinct substances in the human person, but that the human person is identical to the soul. To be clear, this is not an ontological holism (a view that says that the person is the ontological composite of the body and soul) since the person is identified with only the soul. Rather, they see the body and soul as so integrated that the person cannot function properly without the soul being connected to a body. As such, they would argue that the human person is a functional whole.

J.P. Moreland and Scott Rae, for instance, say "according to functional holism, while the soul (mind) is in the body, the body-soul complex is a deeply integrated unity with a vastly complicated, intricate array of mutual functional dependence and causal connection."[2] But in the end, the human person is numerically identical to the immaterial soul. Whatever the merits of this account may be (I leave it to the reader to decide), it is markedly different from the materialistic holism mentioned above. That both materialists and substance dualists can employ the term illustrates the fact that the concept of "holism" is notoriously slippery.

Holism as Psychosomatic Unities

Another trend comes from some who simply avoid using the philosophical categories that the discussion typically rides on. For instance, some eschew philosophical categories, refusing to play within the sandbox of "substance," "soul," and "body." For those who take this approach, there may be affirmations of bodies and souls, but there is very little metaphysical clarity as to what those things actually are. What they will insist upon, however, is that the human person is a psychosomatic whole of the two. Anthony

[2] J.P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IVP: 2000), 21.

Hoekema, for example, says, "My preference, however, is to speak of man as a psychosomatic unity. The advantage to this expression is that it does full justice to the two sides of man, while stressing man's unity."[3]

I will say more about these matters below, but for now I will simply note that this approach seems to just be substance dualism after all. Given that they believe the human person is fully present after death in the intermediate state, it is hard to see how this view isn't identifying the person with the immaterial soul. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that such a view is problematic, I am simply noting how vastly different this account of holism is from the materialistic views noted above.

Holism as Hylomorphism

Finally, the term "holism" is often applied to hylomorphic views of human persons. Philosopher theologians like Thomas Aquinas, for instance, defend what I would call ontological holism—the view that the human person is identical to the composite of body and soul. Like the functional holism noted above, this view sees the human person as an integrated whole of body and soul. But unlike functional holism, the integration is much deeper than mere function. On this view, the human person's being is grounded in the integrated body and soul as a composite. Aquinas says, for example, "For as it belongs to the notion of this particular man to be composed of this soul, of this flesh, and of these bones; so it belongs to the notion of man to be composed of soul, flesh, and bones; for whatever belongs in common to the substance of all the individuals contained under a given species, must belong to the substance of the species."[4]

Once again, my point in surveying each of these is not to take a side on which one is right. Rather, my point is simply that the term "holism" is a slippery concept that can be employed by virtually any account of human persons. As such, when a theologian or philosopher tells us she is a "holist" but does not spend the necessary attention to clarify that content, then they really haven't told us anything at all. We still need to know what they think

[3] Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1994), 217.

[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, Christian Classics: 1948), v.1, p. 336.

about bodies, souls, and the integration of the two in the human person. Is the integration one of function, or is it a deeper ontological integration of the whole person? In their respective work outlining their larger anthropology they may not actually answer these questions. Nevertheless, there is a very simple way to tell what they believe: ignore everything else they say and just look at what they say about human persons at death and beyond!

Death as a Litmus Test for Anthropology

A common frustration across the years has been the inconsistencies between what is often affirmed within a person's anthropology and what is affirmed within his eschatology. Regularly, I find that theologians (and some philosophers) will have much to say about their holistic account of human persons when outlining their anthropology, only to completely betray their view when they talk about what happens at death. As someone who was persuaded by the theologians to embrace a holistic account of human persons and was now looking to them to provide a framework to work within, it was always disappointing to find a given thinker's view fall apart when it came to death. To illustrate and clarify how these matters rise and fall together, consider three different eschatological scenarios and what they imply for our view of human persons. More specifically, what a person says happens in the intermediate state should give you a clear picture of what their view must entail.

Death and Cessation in the Intermediate State

We start with those that take a materialistic view of human persons. On this view, there is no immaterial soul within the human person, and as such, there is nothing that can survive death when the body dies. In eschatological terms, this amounts to a denial of the intermediate state where disembodied souls await the resurrection of the dead. For those that go this route, they suggest that the New Testament places the greatest amount of emphasis on the resurrection of the dead, not the intermediate state. And as such, the most important thing to consider when it comes to life after death, on a Christian view, is how we live again in the resurrection. But between now and the resurrection, the implication is that the person simply does not exist, even if she will exist again.

Of course, there are some materialists that explore various ways that one might persist from death until the resurrection. Pe-

ter van Inwagen, for example, argues for a brain snatching approach that allows the person (who is a purely material being on his view) to live continuously from death until the eschaton.[5] Likewise, Kevin Corcoran explores the logical possibility of body fission events to accomplish the same outcome as van Inwagen.[6]

While I am not primarily interested in critiques at this point, I will briefly note that the problem with these approaches is that they do not resemble anything close to what the Bible describes happening at death, nor do they come anywhere close to what the church affirmed for the past 2000 years. They may give us logically possible ways to overcome the criticisms of materialists who say we cannot survive our death, but they don't give us an account that we could confidently say lines up with the content of Christianity itself. Furthermore, I may be willing to grant that the primary emphasis in the New Testament is in fact on the resurrection of the dead, not the intermediate state. Unfortunately for the Christian materialist, however, this claim misses the point. Even if the emphasis in the New Testament is on resurrection, the question is whether Bible affirms an intermediate state or not. If it does, then it seems we must affirm it as well. Just because it might not be the primary point of emphasis in the New Testament, it doesn't follow that such a doctrine is negotiable.

But aside from that critique, my major point is that what we say a person is (material, spiritual, or both) dictates what we say happens at death and *visa versa*. This is true for the materialist, but as we will see, it will also be true of the other views that follow. If a view is materialistic, that view will either claim that we temporarily cease to exist between death and resurrection, or it will have a hard time making sense out of the intermediate state in a way that resembles the historic teaching of the church.

Death and Persistence in the Intermediate State.

A very common theme for those that reject dualism (or substance dualism more specifically) in their anthropology is to find them affirming something fairly close to it in their eschatology. They might go to great lengths to criticize and distance themselves from Plato, Descartes, and a host of other substance dualists

[5] Peter van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays" in *Christian Apologetics* (Boulder, WestviewPress: 1998).

[6] Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature* (Grand Rapids, Baker: 2006).

throughout the years, adopting instead a "holistic" account that more closely aligns with the historic and theological motifs of Christianity's past. But, the moment they claim the that the human person survives death and is present in the intermediate state waiting for the resurrection of the dead, their view collapses back into the very dualism that they so fervently reject. In short, one simply cannot have it both ways. If we deny that we are immaterial souls that are distinct from our bodies, we cannot turn right back around and claim that "we" are fully alive and present with Christ all while detached from our bodies that are corrupting in the grave. If we claim the latter, then our view is not just dualistic, it is substance dualistic.

None of this is to say, from my seat at least, that it is problematic to hold to substance dualism. This view has been adopted by some of the most notable and able philosophers and theologians throughout history. Rather, the point here is the broader point of this entire article. What you say happens at death is the real indicator of your ontology of human persons. In this particular case, those who deny substance dualism but also claim we exist in the presence of Christ while waiting for the resurrection of the dead are really depending on the very view they reject.

Death and Partial Persistence in the Intermediate State

One final example will help us before we conclude. Just as anthropology and eschatology go hand in hand with materialists and substance dualists, the same is true for hylomorphists. Once again, according to Thomas, a human person is a hylomorphic composite of a body and a soul. As such, the human person is not present when the body and soul are not both present and in union with each other. This has caused concerns at times regarding the "bookends" of life. On the front end, the Christian traditions (Catholic, Reformed, and Orthodox) have all landed with clear affirmations that at the very moment of conception a human person is present. For those that hold to hylomorphism, therefore, some kinds of modifications are necessary to make this work. On the back end of life (death), this also raises the question of whether we actually survive death. If (1) I am the composite of a body and a soul, and (2) death is the separation of the two, then it would seem like an impossibility for me to survive my death.

In response to such questions, Christian hylomorphists generally affirm one of two things. On the one hand, one might hold to

a cessationist view by simply biting the bullet of this ontology and say that the person does not technically survive death even if the soul does, still carrying the consciousness, memories, and spiritual content of the person. Such an approach may come with concern or consternation regarding how well this aligns with Christianity's account of life after death, but it would be a consistent response to the issue from within that ontological perspective. On the other hand, one might also reject this cessationist view in favor of a survivalist view which says that via the soul, the human person survives and is fully present in the intermediate state.[7] If this is the approach you take, then it is hard to see how, like the others mentioned above, this view does not just collapse back into substance dualism or something much like it.

In the end, it's not my purpose in this article to argue for the anthropological position that one should hold. I have my view—a version of Thomistic hylomorphism—but I'm less concerned here with arguing in its favor. For now, I simply note that (1) a theological affirmation of "holism" actually says very little about a person's view, and (2) what you say happens at death provides the clearest indicator of your actual anthropology.

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[7] For an excellent discussion on this, see Patrick Tonor's "Personhood and Death in Thomas Aquinas", in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 26.2, 12 –138, as well as "St. Thomas Aquinas on Death and the Soul" in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (2010): 587–599.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 257–76

How Hard is it to Discern the Self-Consciousness of Jesus?

Perhaps Moses "the Demon" of Crete Can Help

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In a thoughtful essay published a decade ago, Ernst Baasland argued for the need of a "Fourth Quest" that focused on Jesus' "motive and intention."[1] I entirely agree. A year earlier, at the conclusion of a chapter entitled, "The Christology of Jesus," Dale Allison commented, "We should hold a funeral for the view that Jesus entertained no exalted thoughts about himself."[2] The conclusions reached by these scholars complement one another. Both studies touch on a topic that has been much debated by scholars of the various phases of the quest for Jesus,[3] that is, the problem of Jesus' self-understanding or self-consciousness.[4] But things are different now; Jesus research is much more focused on context.[5]

So, can we or should we pursue Jesus' motive and intention, as Baasland recommended? And, if we hold a funeral for the dubious proposition that Jesus entertained no exalted thoughts about himself, can we define these exalted thoughts with reasonable assurance that we probably got them right? Perhaps we can.

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[1] E. Baasland, "Fourth Quest? What Did Jesus Really Want?" in S. E. Porter and T. Holmén (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus.* Volume 1: *How to Study the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 31–56, with quotations from 56.

[2] D. C. Allison Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 304.

[3] The history of this research was recently assessed in C. Brown and C. A. Evans, *A History of the Quests for the Historical Jesus*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022).

[4] Recall the venerable W. Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960). The quest for the historical Jesus in both the "Old Quest" and in the "New Quest" was really a quest for the self-consciousness and motives of Jesus.

[5] Scholarly efforts to find the "consciousness of Jesus" (*Bewusstsein Jesu*) have largely been replaced by inquiry into the social, economic, religious, and political setting of Jesus' upbringing in Galilee.

We should begin by asking if we have evidence from reasonably reliable sources of historical figures of antiquity who entertained exalted thoughts about themselves and their missions. Perhaps we can even discern what those exalted thoughts were, at least in general terms. The Jewish materials in circulation in the approximate time of Jesus are a good place to begin. In the Qumran Scrolls we hear of eschatological messianic expectations, and in Josephus we hear of certain figures who apparently believed they possess great authority, perhaps from God himself. Perhaps from them we can get an idea of what kind of exalted thoughts Jesus might have entertained.

Pre-70 CE Jewish Expectations of Exalted Eschatological Figures

The sectarians of Qumran, whose aversion to all things pagan can hardly be overstated, held to remarkably "high" views of messianism. Alluding to Ps 2:2 and 7 Appendix A of the *Serek* text anticipates a time when God will "beget" (יוליד)[6] the Messiah (1QSa 2:11–12). The text is not speaking of a miraculous birth, but at the very least its author anticipates some sort of divine sponsorship and empowerment of the anticipated anointed figure. The small two-column Aramaic *Son of God* fragment, 4Q246, anticipates the appearance of one who will be given several epithets. He will be called רבא "the Great one," ברה די אל "Son of God," and בר עליון, "Son of the Most High." His kingdom will endure forever (1.9–2.6).[7]

The *Messianic Apocalypse*, 4Q521, says several remarkable things about a future anointed one:

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[6] יוליד is the most convincing restoration; cf. R. Gordis, "The 'Begotten' Messiah in the Qumran Scrolls," *VT* 7 (1957) 191–94. The appearance of יוליד and המשיח make it probable that we have an allusion to Psalm 2, where in v. 2 the nations rage against Yahweh and מְשִׁיחוֹ, "his Anointed," and in v. 7 Yahweh decrees that Israel's king is his בן, "son," announcing, "Today, I have begotten you [יְלִדְתִּיךָ]."

[7] Most scholars agree that the eschatological figure of 4Q246 is Jewish and messianic. See J. A. Fitzmyer, "4Q246: The 'Son of God' Document from Qumran," *Bib* 74 (1993): 153–74; J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 154–72. Fitzmyer does not dub the figure as the "Messiah," because the word משיח does not appear in the two extant columns, but he does regard the figure as an eschatological Jewish royal figure.

> For the heavens and the earth shall obey his messiah [ישמעו למשיחו] and all that is in them shall not turn away from the commandments of the holy ones. … setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, raising up those who are bowed down [Ps 146:7–8]. For he shall heal the critically wounded, he shall revive the dead, he shall send good news to the afflicted [Isa 61:1][8]

What makes this Qumran text so amazing is that it has alluded to Ps 146, which extols the creative, restorative power of Yahweh.[9] Part of the psalm reads:

> Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith for ever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down (Ps 146:5–8a)

4Q521 says that "heaven and earth will obey his (God's) messiah and all that is in them" and then alludes to parts of Ps 146:6–8, which say Yahweh created the "heaven and earth … and all that is in them" and that he will "open the eyes of the blind," etc. 4Q521 implies that the Messiah—whether royal or prophetic—will act with the authority and power of God himself.[10] In a sense, the anointed one will do the very works of Yahweh.

11Q13, the *Melchizedek Scroll*, is every bit as remarkable. The mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, makes his first appearance in Gen 14:18, when he greets Abram after the patriarch's military victory. Melchizedek appears again in Ps 110:4, in reference to the Davidic king. But in 11Q13 we are told that Melchizedek "will proclaim to them (i.e., the righteous of Israel) the jubilee, thereby releasing them from the debt of all their sins" (2.6). We are further told that God "shall atone for all the Sons of Light and the people who are predestined to Melchizedek" (2.8). In some sense, to be linked to Melchizedek is to have one's sins atoned for.

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[8] 4Q521 frg. 2, col. ii, lines 1–2, 8, 12.

[9] B. Wold, "Agency and Raising the Dead in *4QPseudo-Ezekiel* and 4Q521 2 ii," *ZNW* 103 (2012) 1–19. Wold (6) rightly notes that Ps 146 is "deeply influential" on the author of 4Q521.

[10] On the ambiguities of the text, see Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 117–22.

Even more remarkable is the paraphrase of a line from Isa 61:2. The scroll says the anticipated eschatological moment "is the time decreed for 'the year of Melchizedek's favor [שנת הרצון למלכיצדק]'" (2.9). Isaiah actually reads, שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָה, "the year of Yahweh's favor"! In some sense Melchizedek stands in for Yahweh—or perhaps he *is* Yahweh. In the quotations from Pss 82:1–2 and 7:7–8 that follow, Melchizedek is called אלוהים *'elohim*, meaning either "God" or "divine being." In whatever sense we take the language, Melchizedek presides over a heavenly council and "will judge the nations" (11Q13 2.11, with Ps 7:8, which speaks of Yahweh, applied to Melchizedek).[11]

Melchizedek's exalted status makes it possible for the author of 11Q13 to say, "Therefore, Melchizedek will thoroughly prosecute the vengeance required by God's statutes. In that day he will deliver them from the power of Belial, and from the power of all the spirits predestined to him" (2.13). Melchizedek will have the power to deliver God's people from Satan's grip and from that of the evil spirits allied to him.

In lines 14–16 we are told, "This visitation [15] is the Day of Salvation that he (God) has decreed … through Isaiah the prophet concerning all the captives, inasmuch as Scripture says, "How beautiful [16] upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your divine being reigns [מלך אלוהיך]' [Isa 52:7]" (with restoration).

The text of Isa 52:7 is explained: "'Zion' is [24] the congregation of all the sons of righteousness, who uphold the covenant and turn from walking in the way of the people. 'Your Elohim' [אלוהיך] is [25] Melchizedek, who will deliver them from the power of Belial" (11Q13 2.23–25, with restorations). In some sense God is present in Melchizedek ("your god is Melchizedek"), who forgives Israel's sin and defeats Satan (i.e., Belial) and his evil spirit allies.

This brief survey of a few of the writings found among the remains of an ancient Jewish library should make it clear that some Jews expected the appearance of a rather exalted figure. In two texts this figure is called "his Messiah." In one we are told that God will "beget" or "father" him (whether literally or figuratively is not clear). In the other we are told that he will be obeyed by

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[11] Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 162: "11QMelchizedek provides an instance where the divine judgment is executed by a figure other than the Most High."

heaven and earth. This eschatological figure will be called "the Great one," "the Son of God," and "the Son of the Most High." He will defeat Satan and his evil spirit allies. He will liberate Israel, forgive Israel's sin, and judge the nations. He will heal and raise the dead and in some sense he is himself divine, perhaps even a manifestation of God.

Did any historical figures attempt to live up to these expectations? A few may have.

Pre-70 CE Jewish Figures Who Make Exalted Claims

Nothing in the Christology expressed in the New Testament Gospels—whether we trace it back to Jesus himself or to the evangelists—exceeds the eschatological messianism in the Qumran scrolls briefly surveyed. Given this messianic expectation it is not surprising that a number of figures in the approximate time of Jesus appear to have acted on it. One of these figures was a man named Theudas.

The Exalted Claims of Theudas and the Egyptian According to Josephus:

> During the period when Cuspius Fadus was procurator of Judaea [44–46 CE], a certain impostor [γόης τις] named Theudas persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions [τὰς κτήσεις] and to follow him to the Jordan River. He stated that he was a prophet [προφήτης] and that at his command the river would be parted [προστάγματι τὸν ποταμὸν σχίσας] and would provide them an easy passage. With this talk he deceived [ἠπάτησεν] many. Fadus, however, did not permit them to reap the fruit of their folly, but sent against them a squadron of cavalry. These fell upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many prisoners. Theudas himself was captured, whereupon they cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem.[12]

Apparently, the same man is mentioned in the book of Acts. There we are told that "Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing" (Acts 5:36).

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[12] *Antiquities* 20.97–98.

It is probable that Josephus and Luke are referring to the same man and the same incident, the chronological discrepancy notwithstanding.[13] Although it has been suggested that Luke has made use of Josephus, most think that Luke and Josephus have drawn on independent sources.[14] The reference to the number of Theudas' followers as "about four hundred," in contrast to Josephus' "majority of the masses," is much more realistic and likely derives from a different source.[15] If so, then the story of Theudas and his failed movement is multiply attested.

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[13] Josephus clearly dates the incident to the administration of the Roman procurator Fadus (44–46 CE), while the evangelist Luke seems to date the incident to the chaos following the removal of ethnarc Archelaus in 6 CE. On the chronological discrepancy between Luke and Josephus, see the note in L. H. Feldman, *Josephus IX: Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX*, LCL 433 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 440–41. One should look at S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 3–8, where Cohen lists several chronological discrepancies in the parallel accounts in *Jewish War* and *Vita*. Cohen later remarks that in *Jewish War* Josephus abandoned "chronological sequence in favor of a thematic arrangement" (p. 235). In any event, when Theudas appeared and did what he did has no bearing on the point I am making.

[14] One should recall Schürer's pithy conclusion regarding the question of Luke's possible use of Josephus: *Entweder hat Lucas von Josephus überhaupt keine Notiz genommen oder er hat nachträglich von seiner Lectüre wiederum Alles vergessen* ("Either Luke took no notice of Josephus at all or he subsequently forgot everything he read"). See E. Schürer, "Lucas und Josephus," ZWT 19 (1876): 574–82, with quotation from 582. In my view Luke wrote the book of Acts years before Josephus published *Antiquities*. See the next footnote.

[15] See H. St. J. Thackeray, *Selections from Josephus*, Translations of Early Documents (London: SPCK, 1919), 194: "Clearly St Luke had access to some source other than Josephus." See also C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Date of Acts*, HTS 1 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 71, who thinks it highly unlikely that Luke derived his information about Theudas from Josephus. As to which historian, Josephus or Luke, has the correct chronology, is a matter that should be left "open." So C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, WUNT 49 (ed. C. H. Gempf; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 163, whose recommendation is accepted in J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 334. The suggestion that there were two men named Theudas, both of whom led uprisings (one in 6 CE and one in 45 CE), is not convincing. On the rarity of the name Θευδᾶς (Heb. תודוס), which is probably a shortened form of Θεόδωρος, see T. Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity. Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE*, TSAJ 91 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 286–87.

What can we learn about Theudas's motives and self-understanding from these two brief accounts? We have 79 words in Josephus and 24 words in Luke's book of Acts. It is not much to go on, but we can deduce a surprising amount.

First, neither Luke nor Josephus praises Theudas. Neither "believes" in him or in his message or his cause. No one does—at least not after his following was scattered and Theudas was beheaded. So far as we know, no one had any regard for Theudas after his death. His movement died with him. Therefore, we have no reason to believe that his public activities have been embellished or enhanced. There is no reason to suspect that Luke, Josephus, or their respective sources exaggerated Theudas' qualities, virtues, or anything that might have been cited to his credit. In other words, there has been no post-mortem theologizing or lionizing. There has been no myth-making, no apologetic. Josephus describes the man as γόης τις, "some fraud" or "impostor" or "trickster." In Luke's book of Acts, Gamaliel says Theudas claimed εἶναί τινα, "to be somebody," that is, someone who is important or special.[16] The proof that he was not anybody special is seen in his failure and death.

Secondly, Josephus criticizes Theudas and offers no explanation for his public proclamation and activities. As we shall see below, the failure to explain what inspired and motivated Theudas was likely deliberate. Thus, not only does Josephus not exaggerate the man's attributes, he despises him, accusing him of being a γόης, "impostor," and a deceitful liar.

Thirdly, both Luke and Josephus acknowledge that Theudas drew a following. Josephus' "the majority of the masses" (τὸν πλεῖστον ὄχλον, lit. "most of the crowd") is an obvious exaggeration. Luke's "about four hundred" may reflect what was actually reported.[17] That a crowd of people followed Theudas at the very least suggests that they found his message compelling and hopeful,

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[16] Bezae (D) reads εἶναί τινα μέγαν, "to be somebody great." Recall that this is said of the eschatological figure in 4Q246: "will be called 'The Great [רבא]'" (1:9; cf. Luke 1:32).

[17] Josephus states that the Roman procurator sent against Theudas and his following a "troop of horse" (ἴλην ἱππέων), or *ala*, which in the early empire consisted of either 512 or 768 men commanded by either a prefect or tribune. See A. Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare* (London: Cassell, 2000), 212. A unit like this would have had little trouble breaking up a gathering of 400 civilians.

even if in the end it was no more than deceit. What was this message and who did he think he was?

Josephus tells us that Theudas "stated that he was a prophet [προφήτης] and that at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage." The promise to part the water was a sign that God was about to deliver the land to his people. This is what happened in Josh 3–4 and apparently it was what lay behind the promise to part the river. It could be argued that parting the water alluded to Elijah's action (2 Kgs 2:6–8), but the presence of a following made up of poor people, who carry their worldly possessions (κτήσεις) on their backs, suggests the beginning of a new conquest of the land.[18] The rabble that followed Theudas hoped to cross the Jordan dryshod and seize the land. If so, the typology reflects Joshua not the later great prophet.

There is some additional correspondence. John the Baptist was active at the Jordan River, calling for repentance and referring to τῶν λίθων τούτων, "these stones" (Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8), which is probably something he constructed as a reminder of the twelve-stone memorial built by Joshua on the occasion of the crossing of the Jordan River to enter the land of promise (Josh 4:7, 21: "What are these stones [οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι]?").[19] John and Theudas are both beheaded, the former by Herod Antipas the Jewish tetrarch and the latter by Fadus the Roman procurator.

We also think of the unnamed Jew from Egypt, who, according to Josephus, stood on the Mount of Olives and claimed that at his command the walls of Jerusalem will fall down:

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[18] Theudas may have seen his proposed reenactment of the crossing of the Jordan as in fulfillment of the jubilee of Lev 25:13, in which "each one shall return to his possession [τὴν κτῆσιν αὐτοῦ]." The eschatological understanding of Lev 25:13 is attested in 11Q13, which, after quoting Lev 25:13 (cf. 11Q13 2:2), states, "it applies to the Last Days and concerns the captives" (2:4), and then appeals to Isa 61:1, "To proclaim the jubilee to the captives."

[19] The crossing of the Jordan was of interest in the first century, as attested by the allusions to it in 4 Ezra 13:44, 47 (cf. Isa 11:15). According to the first-century *Lives of the Prophets* the prophet Ezekiel, with respect to the river Chebar, "made the water stop" (ἐποίησεν στῆναι τὸ ὕδωρ), which helped the people escape the Chaldeans (*Liv. Pro.* 3:7–9). For discussion of a possible Joshua typology at work in John's references to "these stones," see C. A. Evans, "The Baptism of John in a Typological Context," in A. R. Cross and S. E. Porter (eds.), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, JSNTSup 234 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 45–71. There is also discussion of the activities of Theudas and the unnamed Jew from Egypt.

> At this time there came to Jerusalem from Egypt a man who declared that he was a prophet [προφήτης] and advised the masses of the common people to go out with him to the mountain called the Mount of Olives, which lies opposite the city at a distance of five furlongs. For he asserted that he wished to demonstrate from there that at his command Jerusalem's walls [τείχη] would fall down [πίπτοι], through which he promised to provide them an entrance into the city.[20]

Felix the procurator attacked "with a large force of cavalry and infantry" killing many and dispersing the Egyptian's following. The Egyptian himself managed to escape (*Ant.* 20.171–172).[21]

Like Theudas before him, the unnamed Egyptian Jew modeled after Joshua his redemptive plan for Israel. Whereas Theudas promised to part the Jordan River, even as Joshua did, which in itself recalled Moses parting the Sea of Reeds a generation earlier, the unnamed Egyptian promised to bring down the walls of Jerusalem, even as Joshua brought down the walls of Jericho. Joshua's "the whole wall fell down [ἔπεσεν ἅπαν τὸ τεῖχος]" (Josh 6:20), is echoed in Josephus, "at his command Jerusalem's walls would fall down [πίπτοι τὰ τῶν Ἱεροσολυμιτῶν τείχη]" (*Ant.* 20.170). As did Theudas, the unnamed Jew from Egypt probably thought of himself as an eschatological Joshua.

The Exalted Claims of Alexander of Abonoteichus

Among non-Jews we have the intriguing story of the charlatan Alexander of Abonoteichus (*c.* 105–170 CE), whom Lucian of Samosata (*Pseud.* 1) calls an impostor (γόης). Lucian admits that the man was "tall and handsome in appearance, and really godlike [θεοπρεπής]" (3). His natural beauty, charms, and impressive elocution greatly served his career of chicanery. Alexander claimed to fulfill a prophecy from the *Sibylline Oracles*, which foretold the coming of a προφήτης "in the days of the Romans" (11). Accordingly, Alexander preferred to be addressed as "Prophet" (55). He was the prophet of the cult of Glycon (Γλύκων) the snake god,

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[20] *Antiquities* 20.169–170.

[21] At least it is assumed so, since the man was not identified among the dead or those taken captive. When Paul is arrested the Roman tribune asks him, "Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" (Acts 21:37–38).

recently hatched from an egg, a manifestation of Asclepius the god of healing. Alexander convinced crowds that he could summon the god enabling people to hear him speak providing them with prophecies and advice—for a fee, of course! (14, 19, 22). Indeed, Alexander contrived to create the impression that Glycon actually spoke audibly through him (26, 36).[22] Sometimes Alexander exposed his thigh, which was made to look golden, suggesting that perhaps he was possessed with the spirit of Pythagoras (40).[23] Alexander even claimed to be the incarnation of Asclepius, stating, "I am the new Asclepius [Ἀσκληπιὸς νέος]" (43).[24] Alexander prophesied that he would live to the age of 150 and then be struck by lightning and be carried off to heaven. Instead, he died of a severe infection and gangrene, not yet seventy years of age (59).

Lucian's bitter satire is given a brief but incisive review by Robin Lane Fox.[25] Fox suspects that some of it is historical—after all, Lucian met Alexander and had the opportunity to see the man in action and gauge his influence on the people of Abonoteichus. Fox thinks that Alexander probably did make the claims that he did and—much to the annoyance of Lucian—the crowds more often than not believed him. The physical remains in the region indicate that the cult of Glycon perdured for at least a century.[26]

What we learn from this brief review of interesting characters is that the idea of making remarkable claims was not unheard of. Indeed, these characters not only made remarkable claims, crowds of people believed them. In the case of Alexander of Abonoteichus—if we are to believe the obviously biased and hostile account provided by Lucian—we have a man who knowingly engaged in fraud, motivated, we should assume, by fame and fortune. In the case of Theudas and the unnamed Jew from Egypt, for all we

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[22] Oracles spoken by the god directly to people (i.e., without going through a prophet) were called αὐτόφωνοι.

[23] The "golden" thigh may also have been intended to hint that the awaited Golden Age, through Alexander's ministrations, was dawning.

[24] Recall that snakes were part of the cult of Asclepius. The venom of the snakes of Asclepius were thought to possessive curative powers. The adjective νέος often appears with royal titles.

[25] R. L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 243–50, 720–22 (notes). See also S. A. Kent, "Narcissistic Fraud in the Ancient World: Lucian's Account of Alexander of Abonoteichus and the Cult of Glycon," *Ancient Narrative* 6 (2007): 77–99.

[26] F. Steger, "Der Neue Asklepios Glykon," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 50 (2005): 3–18.

know their motives may well have been entirely sincere, even if misguided. They claimed remarkable authority and large crowds followed them. There is a third Jew to consider.

The Exalted Claims of Fîskîs, known as "Moses" of Crete

In the balance of this study I would like to discuss the not-so-well-known Fîskîs of Crete,[27] who in the fifth century called himself Moses and promised to lead the Jewish faithful from the island of Crete, through the Mediterranean Sea, to the land of Israel. There are several sources for this curious story, most of them quite late and secondary.[28] The best and earliest are found in Socrates Scholasticus of Constantinople (*c.* 380–460 CE) and John of Nikiû of Upper Egypt (7th cent. CE). I shall quote first Socrates, who was a contemporary of Fîskîs (a.k.a. "Moses of Crete"). He reports:

> About this period a great number of Jews who dwelt in Crete were converted to Christianity, through the following disastrous circumstance. A certain Jewish deceiver [ἀπατεών] had the impudence to assert that he was Moses [ὑπεκρίνατο εἶναι Μωϋσῆς] and had been sent from heaven [πεπέμφθαι δὲ ἔλεγεν ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν] to lead out the Jews inhabiting that island and conduct them through the sea [διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀγαγών]; for he said that he was the same person that formerly saved the Israelites by leading them through the Red Sea. During a whole year there he went around the several cities of the island and persuaded the Jews to believe in his assurances. He moreover bid them renounce their money and other property [πάντα τὰ χρήματα καὶ τὰ κτήματα], pledging himself to guide them through a dry sea into the land of promise [ἄξειν γὰρ αὐτοὺς διὰ ξηρᾶς τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὑπισχνεῖτο]. Deluded by such expectations, they neglected business of every

[27] JE 10:252; H. Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden: Von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*. IV: *Vom Untergang des jüdischen Staates bis zum Abschluss des Talmud*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leipzig: Leiner, 1893), 382–84.

[28] Such as Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, *Historia tripartita* (6th century); Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* (8th century); Agapius of Hierapolis, *Kitab al-ʿUnwān* (*Book of the Heading*, 10th century); Michael the Great, *Chronicle* (12th century); Al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd, *al-Majmūʿ al-mubārak* (*The Blessed Compendium*, 13th century); and Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, *Ekklēsiastikē historia* (14th century), among others.

> kind,[29] despising what they possessed and permitting any who chose to take it. When the day appointed by this deceiver [ὁ ἀπατεών] for their departure had arrived, he himself took the lead, and all following with their wives and children, they proceeded until they reached a promontory that overhung the sea, from which he ordered them to fling themselves headlong into it. Those who came first to the precipice did so, and were immediately destroyed, part of them dashed in pieces against the rocks, and part drowned in the waters; and more would have perished, had not some fishermen and merchants who were Christians providentially happened to be present. These persons drew out and saved some that were almost drowned, who then in their perilous situation became sensible of the madness of their conduct. The rest they hindered from casting themselves down, by telling them the fate of those who had taken the first leap. When at length the Jews perceived how fearfully they had been duped, they blamed their own indiscreet credulity, and sought to lay hold of the pseudo-Moses [τὸν δὲ ψευδομωϋσῆν] in order to put him to death. But they were unable to seize him, for he suddenly disappeared [ἀφανής ... ἐγένετο]; which induced a general belief that it was some avenging demon [δαίμων ἀλάστωρ], who had assumed a human form [ἀνθρώπου σχῆμα] for the destruction of their nation in that place.[30]

And now the story according to John of Nikiû:

> And there was a Jew named Fîskîs[31] who in his own person played the role of impostor, saying: "I am Moses the chief of the prophets; for I have been sent from heaven by God.

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[29] One will recall that Paul had to chastise the "idle" who wouldn't work but, rather, ate other people's food (2 Thess 3:6–12). The context in 2 Thessalonians suggests that this idleness was brought on by eschatological expectations, perhaps not unlike the idleness encouraged by Fîskîs who claimed to be "Moses."

[30] *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.38.1–9. For the Greek text of Socrates, see R. Hussey, *Socratis Scholastici Ecclesiastica Historia*, Tomus II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1853), 822–24; G. C. Hansen, ed., *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, GCS N.F. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 387–88. I have adapted the translation in E. Walford and H. de Valois, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, Surnamed Scholasticus* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 378–79.

[31] The name Fîskîs may derive from the Latin *fiscus* ("basket"), which came to refer to the treasury (i.e., the basket used for collecting money).

I have come to conduct the Jews who dwell in this island through the sea, and I will establish you in the land of promise." And by these means he led them astray, saying to them: "I am he that delivered your fathers out of the hand of Pharaoh when they were in bondage to the Egyptians." And he spent an entire year in traversing Crete and proclaiming this event and leading them astray in all the cities and villages. And he prevailed on them to abandon their industries and to despise their goods and possessions. And so they dissipated all that they had. And when the day which he had fixed for leading them out drew near, he commanded them to come with their wives and children and follow him to the seashore, and cast themselves into the sea. And many perished, some through the fall and others from being engulfed in the depths of the sea. But God who loves mankind had compassion on his creatures saved them lest they should all perish by this hard fate. And many Christians who were present on the spot at the time in order to see (what would happen) saved a large number of them from being drowned in the sea. The rest who had not cast themselves into the sea were saved by this means. And when they saw that the false prophet had perished,[32] engulfed in the sea, they recognized thereupon that he was an impostor, and forthwith abandoned their erroneous belief. Through these means many Jews turned to our Lord Jesus Christ and received the light of holy life-giving baptism and believed in our Lord Jesus Christ. (This event took place) in the days of the God-loving emperor Theodosius the younger and in those of Atticus, patriarch of the great city of Constantinople.[33]

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[32] Lit. *ʒətasaṭma*, "he drowned."

[33] *Chronicle* 86.1–11. R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiû, Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), 103–4 (slightly modified). Cf. H. Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean, Évêque de Nikiou. Text Éthiopien* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883), 153 (Ethiopic text), 347–48 (French translation). The original text was written in Greek in the late seventh century, with Coptic insertions added later. For a recent assessment of John of Nikiû as historian, see F.-S. S. Yirga, "The Chronicle of John Nikiu: Historical Writing in Post-Roman Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation; Ohio State University, 2020).

One wonders if Fîskîs and his followers knew that the island of Crete was some 600 miles from Israel? Even if the miracle had occurred and the waters of the Mediterranean Sea had parted, it would have taken these people more than one month to walk over what would have been very difficult terrain! The major difference between the versions of Socrates and John is that in the former Fîskîs vanishes,[34] leading to the speculation that he was an "avenging demon" (δαίμων ἀλάστωρ),[35] while in the latter we are told that he perished in the sea.[36] Agapius says the same, speaking of "unclean spirits." Al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd says the people "seized him and killed him."[37]

There are several scriptural echoes of Moses and the exodus in the story of Fîskîs. First of all, the man "had the impudence to assert that he was Moses" (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38.1).[38] In John of Nikiû's account Fîskîs states, "I am Moses the chief of the prophets" (*Chronicle* 86.1). Fîskîs was not merely a "prophet like" Moses (cf. Deut 18:15, 18); he *was* Moses—evidently Moses *redivivus*! Moreover, Fîskîs claims, "I have been sent from heaven by God" (John of Nikiû, *Chronicle* 86.1),[39] which echoes what God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh: "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you" (Exod 7:16). The claim in *Eccl. hist.* 7.38.1 πεπέμφθαι ... ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, "to be sent *from heaven*" (where

[34] Fîskîs "suddenly disappeared [ἀφανής ... ἐγένετο]" (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38.9), even as the "the Egyptian himself … vanished [ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο]" (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.172).

[35] This version is echoed in Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 8.6. See J.-G. Chabot, ed., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien: Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche*, Tome II (Paris: Leroux, 1901), 25–26, here 26. For Syriac text, see J.-G. Chabot, ed., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien: Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche*, Tome IV: *Texte syriaque* (Paris: Leroux, 1910), 178.

[36] It is curious that John of Nikiû says nothing of the rumor that Fîskîs was a demon, given John's view of history as a struggle between the divine and the demonic. On this point, see Yirga, "Chronicle of John Nikiu," 100–139, 187–88.

[37] N. N. Seleznyov, "Al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd on Moses of Crete," *Scrinium* 15 (2019): 321–27, here 325.

[38] The expression, ὑπεκρίνατο εἶναι Μωϋσῆς, is prejudicial. In this context the verb ὑποκρίνεσθαι means to "pretend," "dissemble," or "exaggerate" (LSJ; BAGD, 1038; *BDAG*, 2225: "play a part," "fake," "imitate"). Socrates implies that Fîskîs was an actor playing a part.

[39] Apud Al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Moses … told them he had come down from heaven to save them, in the same manner as Moses son of 'Imrān." Translation from Seleznyov, "Al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd on Moses of Crete," 322. It reads the same in Agapius.

Moses has been since his mysterious death on Mount Nebo), comports with the Targumic tradition of Moses ascending into heaven to fetch the law (cf. *Tg. Neof.* Deut 30:12). It also reminds us of what the Johannine Jesus says to his disciples, "I have come down from heaven [ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ], not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me [τοῦ πέμψαντός με]" (John 6:38).

Fîskîs promises "to conduct (the Jewish faithful) through the sea [διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀγαγών]" and "to guide them through a dry sea into the land of promise [ἄξειν γὰρ αὐτοὺς διὰ ξηρᾶς τῆς θαλάσσης εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὑπισχνεῖτο]" (Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38.2, 5). This language echoes Exod 14:29 (the people of "Israel went across dry ground through the sea [διὰ ξηρᾶς ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης]"; cf. 15:19, 22). Socrates's εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, "into the land of promise," is probably borrowed from Heb 11:9 (εἰς γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), with which the Christian historian was familiar, but the language probably does reflect the language Fîskîs used, which is found in Scripture and in later Jewish writings (cf. Exod 3:17; Neh 9:8; Ps 106:24; *T. Jos.* 20:1; *T. Abr.* A 8:5; 20:11).

In Socrates Scholasticus's Greek version Fîskîs is called an ἀπατεών, "deceiver," which is the word Josephus uses in describing the impostors and frauds of his time: "Now impostors and deceivers [οἱ δὲ γόητες καὶ ἀπατεῶνες ἄνθρωποι] called upon the mob to follow them into the desert. For they said they would show them wonders and signs [τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα]" (*Ant.* 20.167–168).[40] In the earlier *Jewish War* Josephus says of the would-be prophets and saviors: "For these men were liars and deceivers under pretense of divination [πλάνοι γὰρ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀπατεῶνες προσχήματι θειασμοῦ]" (*J.W.* 2.259).[41] And in reference to the rebels Josephus says, "Thus the deceivers [οἱ … ἀπατεῶνες] and false representatives of God at that time beguiled the wretched people" (*J.W.* 6.288).

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[40] Irenaeus (*c.* 180 CE) speaks of one Marcos, who is a master "of the deceivers [ἀπατεώνων]," well experienced in magical tricks and deceit (*Haer.* 1.13.1).

[41] The use of θειασμός, which means "divination" (LSJ; *BDAG*, 929: "divine inspiration," "possession"), is prejudicial in this context, suggesting that the practice of these impostors was more akin to pagan soothsaying, e.g., "Mithridates raised his voice and spoke as though under divine inspiration [ὥσπερ ἐπὶ θειασμοῦ]" (Chariton, *Callirhoe* 5.7.10).

The sign that Theudas and Fîskîs offered their respective followers, that of parting the water, was modeled after the partings of the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan River, the first under the leadership of Moses (Exodus 14), the second under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 3), successor to Moses. The unnamed Jew from Egypt also offered a sign—that of making city walls collapse—from the same sacred history (Joshua 6).

The great Jewish historian Heinrich Grätz suspects that Fîskîs imagined himself to be the new Moses thanks in part to rabbinic calculations concerning the appearance of the Messiah. One formula suggested the year 440 CE,[42] another the year 471 CE.[43] Grätz thinks it was the first calculation that influenced Fîskîs,[44] for he appeared in public shortly after that date (perhaps 448 CE).

It is important to appreciate the significance of the apparent fact that not only did Fîskîs make an audacious claim, a great many Jews on the island of Crete took his claim seriously. Fîskîs not only made an extraordinary claim about his own identity, he also made an extraordinary claim about what God was about to do through him. Many of his followers took the man so seriously they were willing to risk their lives on no more basis than the man's word. Did he perform other signs or miracles? We do not know.

Evaluating Exalted Claims

As historians, how should we understand these three Jewish men—Theudas, the unnamed man from Egypt, and Fîskîs of Crete? All we have are brief paragraphs, one for each man. The brief descriptions of Theudas and the Egyptian, provided by Josephus, are disparaging and hostile. The two closely parallel descriptions of Fîskîs, provided by Socrates Scholasticus and John of Nikiû, are not as overtly hostile as the language of Josephus, but neither are they sympathetic. Are we forced to conclude that we cannot deduce from our brief, biased reports how these men understood themselves?

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[42] Cf. *b. Sanh.* 97b, which argues for 4,200 years after the creation of the world (by the rabbinic calendar), or 440 CE.

[43] Cf. *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 9b, which argues for 400 years after the destruction of the temple, which by the rabbinic calendar is 4,231 after creation, or 471 CE. See Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 383 n. 1.

[44] Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 383.

I think most will agree that all three of these men were inspired by Moses/Joshua typology, a typology that undergirded an eschatological vision of Israel's restoration. Theudas was convinced that at his command he could part the Jordan River. The Egyptian Jew was convinced that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down. Fîskîs was convinced that the Mediterranean Sea would part and allow him and his following to walk from Crete to Israel. All three of these men held to rather lofty ideas about themselves. Fîskîs evidently saw himself as Moses *redivivus* and—if so—likely empowered by heaven well beyond that of a mere mortal prophet. It is important to note also that all three of these men had large followings. Evidently hundreds of people, perhaps even thousands, found their claims and promises believable—believable enough to sacrifice property and risk life and limb.[45]

Where does this leave us with regard to Jesus of Nazareth? Compared to the three men I have reviewed we have a wealth of data relating to Jesus. We have four biographies called Gospels, which rely on at least three major independent sources (i.e., Mark, Q, and Johannine material). Jesus is referenced in several sources that have a high regard for him, including and above all the letters of Paul. These letters are especially important for the historian, for their author was acquainted with at least a few of Jesus' personal friends and disciples (cf. Gal 1:18–19; 2:7–9, 11, 14). Jesus is also referenced in sources that are either neutral or sharply critical of him and his following. But even in hostile sources the basic outline of activities and teaching corresponds in important ways with what is said of him in favorable sources.[46]

All scholars agree that Jesus spoke of the "kingdom of God." Most agree that Jesus died on a Roman cross as "king of the Jews," and most agree that his preaching and death are connected. More-

[45] Notwithstanding the skepticism and ridicule of religious charlatans expressed in biographies novels. On this, see S. Panayotakis et al., eds., *Holy Men and Charlatans in the Ancient Novel*, Ancient Narrative Supplementum 19 (Groningen: Barkhuis, 2015). Of special interest is I. L. E. Ramelli, "Lucian's Peregrinus as Holy Man and Christian and the Construction of the Contrast between Holy Men and Charlatans in the *Acts of Mari*," 105–20. The role played by Peregrinus in the context of the Christian community is roughly parallel to the role by Fîskîs in the Jewish community of Crete.

[46] For an informed and balanced assessment of these extra-canonical and non-Christian sources, see R. E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, Studying the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

over, Jesus was widely regarded as a healer and exorcist. In the eyes of the public he was successful in these activities, for apparently some attempted similar feats in his name (Mark 9:38–39), while critics claimed that he enjoyed success because he was in league with Satan (Mark 3:20–30). None of this tradition can be easily explained as post-Easter Christian apologetic. Apparently it was widely believed that Jesus did extraordinary things. We should probably concede that his followers did not find it hard to believe that Jesus was himself an exalted figure.

Referring to himself as "the Son of man," Jesus claimed to possess the authority *on earth* to forgive sin (Mark 2:5–11). This curious reply is best understood as implying that as the one "like a son of man" (Dan 7:13–14) Jesus had received authority from God *in heaven*, which now *on earth* he exercises. Thanks to the discovery of 11Q13 we now know that there was the expectation of a figure who would possess authority to forgive Israel's sins. In reply to a discouraged and skeptical John the Baptist, Jesus referred to his deeds (Matt 11:2–5 // Luke 7:18–22), which thanks to the discovery of 4Q521 we now understand to imply possession of great authority, even divine authority.

Are we going out on a limb to infer that Jesus' frequent self-reference as "the Son of man" had something to do with the vision of the "son of man" figure in Daniel, who *in heaven* received authority and kingdom from God? Are we going out on a limb in concluding that Jesus' challenge to the scribal habit of referring to the Messiah as "the son of David" was to make the point that the Messiah is so exalted that even the great King David prophetically calls him his *lord*? In context (i.e., Mark 11:27–12:12) Jesus has answered the question of the scribes and ruling priests, who wanted to know "by what authority Jesus" does what he does and "who gave" him "this authority?" (Mark 11:28). Jesus answered their question implicitly in the parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants (Mark 12:1–12)—he is the "son" of the vineyard owner and it is the owner of the vineyard who has given him his authority. The owner, of course, is God. Thus, Jesus has implied that he is God's son. Must traditions like these be assigned to post-Easter settings? Could they not have originated in the teaching of Jesus himself?

Given tradition like this, is it any wonder that the early Jesus community—a monotheistic Jewish community, let us not forget—proclaimed their Master to be the "Son of God," the true Savior of humanity (in contrast to the not-so-divine Roman em-

peror)? Should we not conclude that the Church's post-Easter high Christology is in all probability rooted in the high Christology of the Church's founder?

Conclusion

So, how hard is it to make an educated guess as to a historical figure's self-understanding and intentions? With regard to Fîskîs of Crete I think we have a pretty good idea of what he thought about himself, even though our sources relating to him are considerably more limited compared to the extant sources relating to Jesus of Nazareth. Many of his contemporaries became convinced that Fîskîs was who he said he was and could do what he said he could do. When he failed, some claimed he was a demon—either because of his gross deception and self-delusion or because of the disastrous consequences (or both).

I find intriguing the accusation that Fîskîs was a demon, for at the very least it is a left-handed acknowledgement of the man's charisma and ability to persuade many people. It also bears witness to the widespread belief in the reality of the supernatural world, in which demonic powers endangered humans. We are not told if anyone spoke out against Fîskîs. His claims and the apparent fact that people gave away property must have been controversial and disruptive. The allegation that he was demonic may well have been voiced before the adventure ended in disaster. If so, then the disaster provided confirmation that the man was indeed an impostor.

The value of our review of figures who in classical antiquity made exalted claims about themselves and their respective missions—all shaped and defined in one way or another by Israel's sacred tradition and interpretive speculations and prophecies that emerged from them—is that it helps us find a context in which we may evaluate what the New Testament Gospels say about Jesus and what Jesus is alleged to have said about himself. To refer to oneself as the mysterious heavenly figure who receives royal authority from God (*apud* Daniel 7) and who through his suffering will accomplish God's redemptive plan for Israel and the world (*apud* Isaiah 53) should not strike us as improbable.[47]

[47] No more improbable than the claims made by the self-exalting figure in 4Q491c (and parallels) who speaks of himself as having ascended to heaven and having taken his seat among the angels.

It could very well be that "high" Christology is present in the pre-Easter Jesus tradition as well as in the post-Easter tradition. In the former it is implicit and inferred; in the latter it is explicit and developed further. Moreover, the latter is hardly explicable without the former. If we start here, perhaps a fourth quest—should one emerge—focused on Jesus' intentions will make more substantial progress.[48]

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[48] It is a pleasure to dedicate this essay to Robert Stewart, whose leadership of the Greer-Heard program has resulted in important publications touching this very theme.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 277–90

Reflections on Religious Pluralism and Multiple Religious Belonging

Harold Netland, PhD

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It was my privilege to participate in the 2009 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum on Faith and Culture. Paul F. Knitter, then the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and I addressed the question, "Pluralism: Can Only One Religion Be True?" Knitter defended the proposition that Christians can be religious pluralists; I argued against it.

When Robert Stewart first approached me about this possibility and explained to me the nature of the Greer-Heard Forum, I was immediately intrigued. This, I thought, is not your typical liberal – evangelical debate. As he puts it in the Preface to *Can Only One Religion Be True? Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue*, the Forum "is to provide a venue for fair-minded dialogue to take place on subjects of importance in religion and culture." The purpose is to bring together an evangelical and a non-evangelical, perhaps even a non-Christian, scholar for a public dialogue on controversial contemporary questions. "The goal," he writes, "is a respectful exchange of ideas, without compromise."[1] It struck me then that this is precisely what we need more of in evangelical theological education. Now, over fifteen years later, the need for this is even greater. In leading the Greer-Heard Forums over these many years, Bob Stewart has given the academy and the church a wonderful gift by showing that evangelicals and others can come together for vigorous, yet respectful and gracious, conversation on controversial topics. May others follow in his footsteps and provide a similar service for the next generation of scholars and practitioners.

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[1] Robert Stewart, "Preface," in *Can Only One Religion be True? Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) xv.

In what follows, I will briefly reflect upon the 2009 dialogue with Paul Knitter by placing that event in the broader context of evangelical discussions of religious pluralism in the 1990s and early 2000s. I will then call attention to a cluster of issues that have become prominent in the theology of religions more recently, namely, the question of multiple religious belonging.

Evangelicals and Other Religions

Widespread interest in the relation between the Christian faith and other religions among European and North American theologians and missiologists emerged after World War II. Since then, an enormous amount of literature on the theology of religions has been produced, most by Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants. Vatican II (1962-65) ushered in a much more open and positive perspective on other religions, the implications of which are still being worked through by Catholic scholars. Gerald O'Collins' *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* provides a useful guide to the documents of the Council and subsequent developments.[2] The breadth of Catholic discussions is captured nicely in the 2010 publication, *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*.[3]

The disagreement among Catholic theologians on the implications of Vatican II is evident in the exchange between Gavin D'Costa and Paul Knitter in *Only One Way?*[4] Knitter insists that Vatican II allows for pluralistic perspectives whereas D'Costa rejects this. D'Costa, in line with Vatican II and later declarations such as *Dominus Iesus* (2000), insists that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, is the only Lord and Savior for all humankind and that salvation is always based upon the sinless person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross. But, again, in line with Vatican II, he also holds that God's salvation in Christ is available to all people, including adherents of other religions. Knitter, on the other hand, rejects traditional Christology and soteriology in favor of pluralism.

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[2] Gerald O'Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[3] Karl J. Becker and Ilaria Morali, eds. *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010).

[4] Gavin D'Costa, Paul Knitter, and Daniel Strange, *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (London: SCM, 2011).

Only One Way? also includes the contribution of evangelical scholar Daniel Strange, and the debate among these three theologians provides a helpful case study in theological method when applied to other religions.

Although religious pluralism – the idea that all religions (or at least all the "good" ones) are roughly equal with respect to truth and soteriological efficacy and thus that no single religion can legitimately claim to be superior to others – has a long history in Asia, it also became influential in Europe and North America in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Leading liberal theologians advocate versions of this thesis, with John Hick being the most influential defender of religious pluralism. At one time an orthodox Christian theologian and philosopher, by 1980 Hick had rejected traditional Christian doctrines and had fully embraced religious pluralism. His 1986-87 Gifford Lectures, published as *An Interpretation of Religion*, established Hick as the premier advocate for a radical pluralism which tries to maintain parity among the major religions, without privileging any particular tradition.[5] Despite its many problems, I still think that it is the most comprehensive and rigorous version of religious pluralism available.[6] Paul Knitter, then at Xavier University, enthusiastically embraced Hick's pluralism and not only coedited with Hick an influential collection of essays on pluralism but advanced his own model.[7]

Around 1990 evangelicals also joined the debate over other religions, and in the following decades a number of evangelicals

[5] John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); second edition published in 2004.

[6] I have offered my own critique in several places. See, for example, Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001) chapters 5-7; "Religious Pluralism as an Explanation for Religious Diversity," in *Philosophy and the Christian Worldview*, eds. David Werther and Mark D. Linville (New York: Continuum, 2012) 25-49; and *Christianity and Religious Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015) chapters 5-6.

[7] See John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987); Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985); *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995); *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

produced works exploring issues in theology of religions.[8] In 1992 two books by evangelicals placed theology of religions – or at least one aspect of theology of religions – squarely on the agenda of North American theologians and missiologists. Clark Pinnock's *A Wideness in God's Mercy* and John Sanders' *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* advocate what came to be known as the "wider hope," which maintains that on the basis of Scripture we can expect that large numbers of those who never hear the gospel nevertheless will be saved.[9] Pinnock and Sanders argue that although Jesus Christ is the one Savior for all people and salvation is possible only because of Christ's atoning work on the cross, one need not know explicitly about Jesus Christ to be saved, and thus we can be optimistic about the salvation of the unevangelized. The writings of Pinnock and Sanders provoked a vigorous and acrimonious debate among North American evangelicals. I was living in Japan when I read these books, returning to the United States in 1993 to begin teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Two things in particular struck me about the furor over these books.

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[8] For an overview, see Harold Netland, "Christian Mission Among Other Faiths: The Evangelical Tradition," in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths*, eds. Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2011) 45-56. Among evangelical contributions are Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003); *The Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004); Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Reli*gions (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Gerald McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Terry Muck and Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ivan Satyavrata, *God Has Not Left Himself Without Witness* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011); Daniel Strange, *'For Their Rock Is Not As Our Rock:' An Evangelical Theology of Religions* (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2014); and Iain McGee, *Revelation in Christian Theologies of Religions* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2024).

[9] Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992). A similar view, from a Reformed perspective, is found in Terrance L. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

First, I was dismayed by the anger and vituperation manifest by some evangelicals against Pinnock and Sanders. These are difficult and perplexing questions, and over the centuries thoughtful Christians, including missionaries, have held various positions on the issues.[10] The controversy was surprising in part because the "wider hope" perspective was not really new in evangelicalism. In the 1970s and 80s the respected British scholar and former missionary J. N. D. Anderson had advanced essentially the same view. For two decades Anderson's *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (1970) and *Christianity and World Religions* (1984) were the major evangelical treatments of the gospel and other religions, and he was regularly invited to speak and write on the subject, expressing a kind of unofficial evangelical perspective on other religions.[11]

Second, what was equally troubling was the fact that for most evangelicals it seemed that the only important question raised by religious pluralism is the salvation of the unevangelized. To be sure, this is a significant issue which continues to demand thoughtful and responsible reflection, but I was convinced that there are many other complex and urgent questions which evangelicals also need to address.

My own interest in the theology of religions resulted from two factors – my doctoral work with John Hick and then my experience in missions in Japan. I had completed my PhD under Hick at Claremont Graduate University in the early 1980s, and this experience impressed upon me the complexity of the issues associated with religious pluralism. Ten years of ministry experience in Japan further reinforced the importance of these questions, not just for academics but for the church in general.

It was through John Hick that I was introduced to the work of Paul Knitter. I recall reading Knitter's influential *No Other Name?* (1984) while riding the trains around Tokyo. When I did meet him in 2008, I was already well acquainted with his writings. In fact, prior to our Greer-Heard Forum exchange I had already had two

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[10] I have dealt with salvation and the unevangelized in McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions,* 146-160.

[11] See Sir Norman Anderson, "The Gospel: A Story to Tell the Nations," in *Evangelical Roots*, ed. Kenneth Kantzer (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978) 173-183; "Christianity and the World Religions," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Frank Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 143-157; and "A Christian Approach to Comparative Religion," in *The World's Religions*, ed. Sir Norman Anderson (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1975) 228-237.

public events with Knitter, and I found him to be a delightful and thoughtful dialogue partner. The Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School had sponsored a dialogue between Knitter and me in April 2008 on the question "Can a Christian be a Religious Pluralist?" Knitter, in turn, then invited me to speak to his students at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in October 2008. Interaction with the students at Union reinforced for me the gap that exists between evangelicals and liberal pluralists on these issues.

So, I was pleased to accept the invitation from Bob Stewart to engage once again with Knitter at a Greer Heard Forum event. What we experienced at the Forum was two days of thoughtful and hard-hitting, but also respectful and gracious, dialogue on a range of complex issues. Bob Stewart skillfully led us through a theological and missiological minefield, demonstrating how orthodox Christians can engage with skeptics in a respectful and irenic manner, upholding Christian commitments without evading the hard questions.

Multiple Religious Belonging

In what remains I will touch briefly on an issue receiving much attention today, including in evangelical missiological contexts. I refer to the matter of religious identity and the extent to which disciples of Jesus Christ can retain or adopt religious identity markers from other religious traditions. A variety of terms are used for this – multiple religious identity, hybrid religiosity, dual belonging, multireligious belonging, and so on. I will use "multiple religious belonging" in referring to the attempt to be "at home" in more than one religious tradition. The question can be approached from the perspective of either a religious pluralist or an evangelical who wishes to be faithful to the teaching of Scripture.

There has long been a tradition of multiple religious belonging in Asia, so that a Japanese, for example, might participate fully in both Buddhist and Shinto religious rites.[12] Asian religions have not been exclusive in the way that Christianity has been. But, with globalization and the growing influence of religious pluralism in the West, multiple religious belonging is now more common in

[12] Jan Van Bragt, "Multiple Religious Belonging of the Japanese People", in Catherine Cornille, ed. *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002) 7-19.

Europe and North America as well. As Catherine Cornille observes,

> In a world of seemingly unlimited choices in matters of religious identity and affiliation, the idea of belonging exclusively to one religious tradition or of drawing from only one set of spiritual, symbolic, or ritual resources is no longer self-evident… A heightened and widespread awareness of religious pluralism has presently left the religious person with the choice not only of *which* religion, but also of *how many* religions she or he might belong to… It may be argued that in this, religion in Europe, America, and Australia is just coming to terms with a practice or a form of religiosity that has been prevalent for ages in most of the rest of the world, and especially in the East.[13]

Questions about multiple religious belonging are now relevant not only throughout Asia and Africa but also in North America and Europe.

Two very different groups have adopted the idea of multiple religious belonging, although they do so in different ways. First, it should surprise no one that religious pluralists often embrace multiple religious belonging. This flows naturally from pluralist convictions. If there is parity among all religions such that no single tradition can legitimately claim to be distinctively true, then there is no reason to insist on any one religious identity as somehow normative for all people.

Not surprisingly, Paul Knitter is an example of a religious pluralist who has embraced multiple religious identities. Ordained into the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1966, Knitter was granted permission to leave the priesthood in 1975. Although still identifying as a Christian, he then became increasingly attracted to Buddhist teachings and practices, incorporating them into his Christian framework. Shortly after our 2009 Greer-Heard dialogue, Knitter published a book in which he states that in 2008 he had "taken refuge" in the "bodhisattva vows" and become a Buddhist, so that he now identifies as both Christian and Buddhist. "So it's official. I am now, you might say, a card-carrying Buddhist. In1939 I was baptized. In 2008 I took refuge. I can truly call my-

[13] Catherine Cornille, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging", in *Many Mansions?*, 1. Emphasis in original.

self what I think I've been over these past decades: a Buddhist Christian."[14]

Knitter's kind of multiple religious belonging is not uncommon in the West. But this is not a case of someone desiring to remain faithful to the historic, orthodox Christian tradition while also embracing some aspects of traditional Buddhism. Rather, it is an example of a new kind of hybrid spirituality which draws upon elements of Christianity and Buddhism while nevertheless moving significantly beyond each. Knitter has so significantly modified what it traditionally has meant to be Christian or Buddhist that the term "Buddhist Christian" signifies a departure from each historic religion. In reading Knitter's book, it is clear that he is unable to believe many of the central doctrinal affirmations of historic Christianity, and he selectively reinterprets key Buddhist and Christian teachings to make them more amenable to his pluralist perspective. This kind of multiple religious belonging is not likely to be an option for most evangelicals.

But the issues raised by multiple religious belonging have also been the subject of intense debate in evangelical missiological circles. Can disciples of Jesus Christ who wish to remain faithful to the teachings of Scripture also adopt religious identity markers from other religions? Can, for example, followers of Jesus within a Muslim community refer to themselves publicly as Muslims and remain socially and legally Muslim while worshiping Isa (Jesus) as Lord and Savior? Can they participate in ritual liturgical worship within a mosque setting, including ritual prayers (*salat*)? What about public recitation of the *Shahadah* or Confession of Faith ("I bear witness that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God")? Evangelical missiologists agree that aspects of Islamic theology or practice that are clearly incompatible with biblical teaching should be rejected, whereas beliefs and practices that are not obviously forbidden might be adopted. But, of course, much of the debate is over just what is, and is not, incompatible with biblical faith.[15]

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[14] Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 216.

[15] See J. Dudley Woodberry, "Contextualization Among Muslims," in Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, eds. *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus Within Diverse Religious Communities* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015), 407-435.

For evangelicals, these issues became especially urgent with the emergence of an unusual phenomenon in twentieth century missions – large numbers of people deciding to become followers of Jesus but desiring to remain within their own cultural and religious settings and thus continuing to identify as Muslim or Hindu followers of Jesus. These are commonly referred to as "insider movements."[16] There is considerable variety within these diverse movements, and not all advocates of insider movements agree on the degree to which particular terms, beliefs or practices from the surrounding religious traditions should be adopted. The fact that large numbers of people in previously resistant contexts are choosing to become Christ's disciples is cause for rejoicing. Debates over religious identity in such contexts are ultimately about how best to nurture discipleship among believers and meaningful witness within the broader community.

Becoming disciples of Jesus involves both continuities and discontinuities with our past. In becoming a disciple, for example, one does not abandon one's nationality or ethnicity. At the same time, embracing Jesus Christ as Lord always includes a turning from, or rejection of, some aspects of our past. In following Christ some things are left behind. But the break with the past must be over the right issues and for the right reasons. When someone from a Buddhist or Islamic background, for example, decides to follow Jesus, how much of his or her previous identity should be affirmed?

These questions can be understood as an extension of traditional missiological debates over contextualization, or the endeavor to express the Christian gospel in meaningful and appropriate ways within particular cultural settings.[17] But, for the most part, evangelical discussions of contextualization make a clear distinction between religion and culture and assume that contextualizing the gospel within cultural contexts can be appropriate whereas

[16] See Harley Talman, "Historical Development of the Insider Paradigm," in *Understanding Insider Movements,* 11-23; William A. Dyrness, *Insider Jesus: Theological Reflections on New Christian Movements* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016); Darren T. Duerksen, *Christ-Followers in Other Religions* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2022); and Timothy Tennent, "Followers of Jesus in Islamic Mosques," in Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 193-220.

[17] See A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith: A Wholistic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

doing so by embracing local religious terms, practices, or beliefs is not. Current debates over religious identity extend the earlier contextualization discussion to include the religious dimension and ask whether, or to what extent, local religious markers of identity can be adopted by disciples of Jesus.

Kang-San Tan, a theologian and missiologist active in the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Association, urges evangelicals to accept multiple religious belonging in appropriate circumstances. Tan, who "grew up in a Confucian Chinese tradition mixed with Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism," maintains that focusing just on contextualization with respect to culture is inadequate and that we need to ask new questions about the relation between the gospel and religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.[18] He calls for "inreligionization," a necessary step beyond contextualization which might well include multiple religious belonging. Tan insists that, "It is not only possible for evangelical Christians to maintain dual-religious identities, but that such self-understanding is becoming an evangelical imperative."[19] Mission should move beyond evangelism and church planting to include "a radical transformation of whole cultures and religious life."[20] When we do so it becomes possible to speak of "Hindu Christianity" or "Buddhist Christians." The issues raised by inreligionization are complex and defy simple answers. But several points can be made briefly.

I agree with Tan that evangelicals need to take the major religions much more seriously than we have in the past. Missionaries and local Christian leaders generally have not taken the time to study carefully religions such as Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. Responsible phenomenological analysis does reveal some significant similarities between the major religions and Christianity in

[18] Kang-San Tan, "Crossing Religious and Cultural Frontiers: Rethinking Mission as Inreligionization," in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 39:2-4 (Summer-Winter 2022), 72. See also Tan, "The Inter-Religious Frontier: A 'Buddhist-Christian' Contribution," in *Mission Studies* 31 (2014), 139-156; "Contextual Frameworks for Interreligious Communication: An Asian Perspective," in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 39:1 (Spring 2022) 5-13. My comments in the following section draw upon Harold Netland, "Making Disciples, Contextualization, and Inreligionization: Some Reflections," in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 39:2-4 (Summer-Winter 2022) 79-85.

[19] Tan, "The Inter-Religious Frontier," in *Mission Studies* 31 (2014) 155.

[20] Tan, "Contextual Frameworks," 10.

some areas, and these need to be acknowledged and accounted for theologically. The major religions are vast, complex, multi-dimensional realities that contain within them elements of both good and evil, truth and falsehood. Evangelicals need a more nuanced theology of religions which acknowledges the complexities of the lived realities of religious traditions and communities in our world.

Furthermore, we need to acknowledge that the boundaries between "the cultural" and "the religious" are fluid and messy, so that it is often very difficult to determine whether a term, practice, or institution is religious or cultural. Concepts such as culture, religion, the world religions, and even the notions of Hinduism and Buddhism as distinct religions, were developed in the modern era as Europeans and Americans became increasingly aware of the bewildering differences among groups of people worldwide. As such, these concepts are in part modern constructs.[21] This does not mean that they do not refer to real patterns among diverse groups. Nor does this suggest that what the terms "culture" and "religion" refer to had no reality prior to modern times. But it does mean that these concepts were developed under particular historical circumstances and for certain purposes. They are conceptual lenses intended to help us see and understand general patterns of similarity and difference across groups of people worldwide.

Given the ambiguity and messiness of these concepts, it becomes very difficult in many cases to identify something clearly as either religious or cultural. Markers of religious identity often carry with them strong ethnic, cultural and political connotations. The most significant issue is not the label we ascribe to a particular term, belief or practice -- whether it is cultural or religious. Rather, the really important question is whether adopting that term or belief or practice will make it easier for people to become disciples of Jesus Christ or whether doing so will actually inhibit discipleship.

The issue of multiple religious belonging is complicated further by the fact that the meanings of key terms, rituals or even beliefs are often contested. There are typically a number of parties involved in determining meaning, so who decides what is acceptable and on what basis? Certainly the individual or group deciding to

[21] See Netland, *Christianity and Religious Diversity*, chapter 1.

follow Jesus has a say in the matter, but their views are not necessarily determinative. Our identities are public and thus they are in part beyond our own control and are shaped by what others perceive us to be. The relevant stakeholders in the question whether a group of followers of Jesus can also legitimately claim to be Muslims and to participate actively in the Muslim community include not only the local Muslims but also other Christians in the area. Moreover, in a globalizing world, the manner in which a local community handles these matters cannot be entirely isolated from Muslim or Christian communities in other parts of the world. What is acceptable in one location might not be acceptable to Muslims or Christians elsewhere. What might be understood as simply a cultural matter in one context might have heavy religious overtones in another. In other words, some stakeholders are likely to be unhappy regardless of the decision made about such dual identities.

The language of multiple religious belonging suggests that one can genuinely *belong* to more than one religious tradition and community. This is more than simply being influenced by certain beliefs or practices from another tradition. To really belong to a particular religious tradition or community involves accepting the central beliefs of that tradition. Can one really do this with two or more religions, without reinterpreting these doctrines in ways that would not be acceptable to insiders within those traditions? Peter Phan is a Roman Catholic theologian who defines inreligionization in terms of accepting doctrines from another religion. Tan quotes Phan's definition approvingly:

> Beyond the debates of insider movements, "inreligionization" is the attempt by Christians coming from Asian religious traditions to "believe that it is possible and even necessary not only to accept in theory certain doctrines or practices of other religions and to incorporate them, perhaps in modified form, into Christianity, but also to adopt and live in their personal lives, the beliefs, moral rules, rituals, and monastic practices of religious traditions other than Christianity."[22]

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[22] Tan, "Contextual Frameworks for Interreligious Communication: An Asian Perspective,"10. The embedded quotation is from Peter Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: An Asian Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004) 61. See also Peter Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportuni-

Phan calls for Christians to adopt certain doctrines or practices from other religions. This might not be problematic with certain doctrines -- both Muslims and Christians, for example, believe that the universe was created by an eternal creator God.[23] But it is not so simple with other religions, such as Buddhism. On Phan's proposal, which Buddhist doctrines should Christians accept? The Four Noble Truths, the central teaching of traditional Buddhism? There is an elegant logic to these four core teachings and I find the Buddhist analysis of desire / craving (*tanha*) to be very perceptive. But I cannot accept these as the true teaching about the origin of suffering and its elimination. And if I cannot accept the Four Noble Truths as the correct diagnosis of the causes of suffering then I cannot accept the Noble Eightfold Path as the prescription to its elimination. Nor can I, given the Christian teaching on creation, accept the doctrine of *paticca-samuppada* (variously translated as dependent origination or origination by dependence) as the fundamental principle of things coming into being. I also think the traditional teaching of *anatta* – no self – is incompatible with the Christian understanding of the person. And, of course, until the twentieth century, Buddhism was understood as denying the reality of an eternal Creator God.[24] If inreligionization means accepting any of these core Buddhist teachings as they are understood within Buddhism, then it is hard for me to see how disciples of Jesus who wish to be consistent with New Testament teachings can go down this path.

The debate over religious pluralism, as framed by Hick and Knitter, is an important one which continues to demand careful response by evangelicals. But equally significant is the intra-evangelical debate over multiple religious belonging and the degree to which disciples of Jesus can adopt local religious markers of identity. It is my hope that both debates will be conducted with

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ties and Challenges for Theology and the Church," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 495-519.

[23] Some will object that Muslims and Christians are not speaking about the same God, so they are not really embracing the same doctrine. I address this objection in Harold Netland, "On Worshiping the Same God: What Exactly Is the Question?" *Missiology* 45:4 (2017) 441-456.

[24] On the question of the compatibility of Buddhism with an eternal creator God see Keith Yandell and Harold Netland, *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009) 181-92.

the rigor, respect and graciousness championed by Bob Stewart and the Greer-Heard Forum.

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 291–309

What's in a Name? Justin Martyr, the *Logos Spermatikos*, and Contemporary Inclusivism

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Both the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum and Bob Stewart had an immense impact on my academic journey in the 2010s. I am so grateful for NOBTS's commitment to conversations and the pursuit of truth, and the spirit of Greer-Heard for many years set the standard for charity. Likewise, Bob has served as a conversation partner throughout my PhD studies and as a colleague in the academy and ministry. It is my joy to contribute in his honor a simple yet surprising thesis on an early Christian's view of salvation (or lack thereof) outside the Christian church. Several Greer-Heard Forums centered on the topic of religions, and although this article centers on a seemingly settled question intramural to evangelicals, I hope it prizes the careful consideration exhibited in the Greer-Heard Forums by evangelical, mainline, and skeptical scholars (and Bob!) alike.

Introduction

In the late twentieth century, Protestant calls for Christian inclusivism heightened with the works of Clark H. Pinnock and John Sanders. Both Pinnock and Sanders advocated for a "wider hope" which affirmed God's universal salvific will and universally accessible salvation. Both also cited a common source in support of their views: second-century apologist Justin Martyr. According to Pinnock and Sanders, Justin was a prototype of general revelation inclusivism, a position which turns on Pinnock's "faith principle:" "Since God has not left anyone without witness, people are judged on the basis of the light they have received and how they

have responded to that light."[1] Even Christian exclusivists such as Harold Netland conceded Justin as an "outstanding exception" to the trend of early Christian exclusivism, such that Pinnock's and Sander's appeal has been accepted as plausible historical evidence.[2]

Pinnock and Sanders cited two key ideas from Justin's *Apologies* in support of general revelation inclusivism. First, in *1 Apology*, Justin called Greek philosophers and other figures before Christ by the name "Christian:"'

> Those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, and Ananias, and Azarias, and Misael, and Elias, and many others whose actions and names we now decline to recount, because we know it would be tedious.[3]

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[1] Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 157–58. See also John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 226–29.

[2] Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1991), 12. Netland later clearly stated that Justin did not represent a proto-inclusivism, but his reference lacked the detailed objections of this article. Likewise, exclusivist James Sigountos betrayed some inconsistency in fighting the perception of Justin as an inclusivist. Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 251–52; James G. Sigountos, 'Did Early Christians Believe Pagan Religions Could Save?' in *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 229–41.

[3] Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 46. All Greek text cited below from Justin Martyr, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr, to Which is Appended the Epistle to Diognetus*, ed. Basil L. Gildersleeve (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877). Footnotes will indicate where my English translations differ from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe.

The *Apologies* will be cited as distinct documents in this paper for clarity. It will be argued below that the unique appellation of pagans as Christians in *1 Apology* must be considered in the immediate context of *1 Apology* only. This, however, should not be taken as a judgment as to whether the *Apologies* were originally written as one document. For background on the original nature of the *Apologies* see Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadel-

Pinnock employed this passage together with his argument for holy pagans in the Bible while insisting, "A person who is informationally premessianic, whether living in ancient or modern times, is in exactly the same spiritual situation."[4] Extending this conclusion to the unevangelized, Pinnock's inclusivism held that individuals could be saved in Christ on the basis of general faith in God in response to whatever general revelation they have received.

Second, Pinnock and Sanders appealed to Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos*, the seminal word/reason which is scattered throughout the world. Sanders explained Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos*, "As Justin understood it, the seed (*sperma*) of the universal logos is present in all races, so all people have some degree of divine revelation from God, although in Jesus Christ the logos in his *fullness* is revealed to the human race."[5] Although this summary of Justin's position is accurate, Pinnock and Sanders conflated this position with *1 Apology* 46 to tie the revelation of the *logos spermatikos* to their "faith principle." Pinnock applied the doctrine thus: "They all [Greek Fathers] spoke of the seminal word or reason in which all humankind partakes, and they considered that persons who live by this word of God were in effect Christians, even though they had never heard of Jesus or were able to confess him."[6]

In this article, I will argue that Pinnock and Sanders misapplied Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* and misinterpreted Justin's appellation of philosophers as Christians. A thorough reading of *2 Apology* demonstrates that Justin withheld the fullness of salvation from pagans despite an optimistic stance toward their possession of divine revelation and their application of that revelation to their moral lives. Further, the context of *1 Apology* and the description of ancient Greeks therein demand that the unique appellation in *1 Apology* be considered separately from arguments regarding the *logos spermatikos*. In the *Apologies*, Justin did not assert that pagans could be saved apart from knowledge of Christ. Contrary to Pinnock's and Sanders's arguments, Justin Martyr wrote the *Apologies*

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phia: Westminster Press, 1988), 52–55; Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into the Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and its Hellenistic and Judaistic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968), 84–87.

[4] Pinnock, 161.

[5] Sanders, 240 citing Justin, *2 Apology* 8, 10, 13.

[6] Pinnock, 36.

in an effort to endear Christianity to the Greco-Roman world and at no point had the destiny of the unevangelized in view.[7]

Justin's Concept of the *Logos*

Justin's *logos* doctrine was likely the result of the development and combination of several philosophical and theological traditions. The melding of these traditions provided Justin a concept with apologetic and evangelistic application. As a philosopher, Justin was well aware of the Greeks' descriptions of the rational *logos*. Heraclitus and other early thinkers sought to identify the primal element by which all else existed. Erwin Goodenough theorized that Justin's possible philosophical influences included Heraclitus, Stoicism, and Middle Platonism.[8] L. W. Barnard noted Stoicism, Jewish creation traditions, Jewish wisdom traditions, Philo, and John as possible influences informing Justin's concept of the *logos*.[9] Images from the New Testament likely informed Justin's teaching as well. The word picture of the disseminated and implanted seed may have been inspired in part by Jesus's parable of the sower.[10] Finally, as Barnard highlighted, the *logos* doctrine of the Gospel of John is also a strong candidate for influencing Justin's concept.[11]

Justin began his treatise with an appeal to the Emperor Antoninus Pius describing *logos* as reason: "Reason directs those who are truly pious and philosophical to honour and love only what is

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[7] Although the aim of this paper does not include identifying Justin's appropriate place in modern categories such as exclusivism, the interpretation presented below is at least consistent with understanding Justin as a gospel exclusivist. Justin's explicit support for specific means of salvation which include knowledge of Christ and his invitation to salvation to those who *have* heard the gospel message are common aspects of exclusivism.

[8] Goodenough, 2–14.

[9] L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 86–88.

[10] The seed sown in the parable is revealed to be the word (*logos*) of God (Lk 8:11, cf. Mt 13:19, Mk 4:14).

[11] Scholars have emphasized the influence of Jn 1:9 on Justin's conception of *logos*. The *logos spermatikos* present across tribes and time revealing truth to all shows a clear resemblance to John's declaration that the *logos* was 'the true light, who gives light to everyone' (Jn 1:9, cf. Jn 1:1, 14 for context of John's identification of *logos* and *phos*). See Gerald R. McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 14, 117–18.

true."[12] Justin's use of *logos* as reason continued throughout the work, carrying a sense of moral responsibility.[13] Early in *1 Apology*, however, Justin also identified the *logos* with Jesus. God's ordering and revealing *logos* was universal but in recent times had become personal in Jesus the Christ. In Justin's thought, the incarnation served as the point at which the cosmic power of *logos* provided humans with direct revelation of God. The true reason (*ho althetes logos*) which Socrates had used in ancient times was revealed personally in Jesus. Justin summarized the incarnation of the *logos* in comparison to Socrates: "For not only were these [wicked acts] exposed among the Greeks through Socrates by reason (*hupo logou*) but also among the Barbarians by himself, the Reason who took form and became human and was called Jesus Christ."[14] According to Justin, the *logos*, ordained by God and giving creation order, was originally hidden and obscured by demons. In Jesus, however, the *logos* became concrete and visible to all. The *logos*'s intimate connection to God was continued by Christ's union with God's will.

Justin believed that the universal presence of the *logos* apart from the incarnation provided some truth and true reasoning to all people in all times. To describe these limited manifestations given to all humans, he used the phrase *logos spermatikos*: the seminal word. In applying Jacob's blessing of Judah as a prophecy of Christ, Justin called the *logos* the 'seed of God' (*tou theou sperma*).[15] Next, when comparing the work of Greek philosophers to Hebrew prophecy, Justin admitted that there were "seeds of truth among everyone" (*para pasi spermata aletheias*).[16] The Stoics' moral teachings were commendable because in them was an expression of the "seed of reason (*sperma tou logou*) implanted in every race of humans."[17] Christ "was and is the Word who exists in every per-

[12] Justin, 1 Apology 2.

[13] If Christianity found approval with the Roman rulers, true reason compelled them to exonerate Christians: "true reason forbids you . . . to wrong blameless men." Ibid., 3.

[14] Justin, *1 Apology* 5. See also Ibid., 23: "being [God's] word and firstborn and power, and becoming human according to [God's] will." Translations mine.

[15] Justin, *1 Apology* 32.

[16] Justin, *1 Apology* 44.

[17] Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin* in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 8.

son."[18] Repeatedly, however, when Justin cited the concept of the *logos spermatikos*, he immediately contrasted the limited content of the seminal word (usually accompanied by the adjective *meros*, share or part) with the full revelation of the "whole word (*pantos logou)*, which is Christ."[19]

Application of the *Logos Spermatikos*

Justin Martyr affirmed that all people in all places possessed some knowledge of truth and reason because of the *logos spermatikos*. God's word, later revealed personally in Jesus of Nazareth, was available to all through the seminal word sown throughout humanity. Pinnock and Sanders argued that Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* provided a message to those who lived before the incarnation and the unevangelized after the incarnation by which those individuals could respond in faith and be saved. Sanders indicates that his first argument for inclusivism:

> centers on a distinction between believers and Christians and is usually closely connected with the issue of faithful Gentiles. In this context, believers can be defined as all those who are saved because they have faith in God. Inclusivists contend that all Christians are believers but that not all believers are Christians.[20]

Although Sanders did not cite Justin in this first consideration, the distinction of non-Christian "believers" is the same he drew upon in arguing for Justin's alleged inclusivism when citing *2 Apology* 6, 8, 10, and 13.[21] Sanders brashly labeled Justin a general revelation inclusivist just as Pinnock labeled Justin an inclusivist when he identified Justin's doctrine with Karl Rahner's support for "anonymous Christians."[22] However, comparison of Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* and how he believed individuals applied knowledge given by the *logos* will demonstrate that Sanders and Pinnock misappropriated Justin's teaching when they argued

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[18] Justin, *2 Apology* 10. Translation mine.

[19] Justin, *2 Apology* 8, 10.

[20] Sanders, 224–25.

[21] Sanders, 268.

[22] Pinnock, 188. Pinnock recognized that Justin would not have fit the category of world religion inclusivism despite his comparison to Rahner. Op. cit., 90.

that he believed individuals were saved by responding to the *logos spermatikos*.

"Holy Pagans" in Justin's Thought

To support his "faith principle," Pinnock affirmed the salvation of holy pagans in the Old Testament. He argues, "These were people saved by faith without any knowledge of the revelation vouchsafed to Israel or the church."[23] Pinnock listed Abel, Noah, Enoch, Job, Jethro, the queen of Sheba, the centurion, and Cornelius as holy pagans saved without knowledge of Christ and then quoted *1 Apology* 46 in support of his inclusivist position.[24] Does Justin's citation of Socrates and Heraclitus fit Pinnock's holy pagan argument? Did Justin believe the *logos spermatikos* provided Plato and others general revelation to which they could respond in faith and be saved?

One complicating factor in deeming Justin a general revelation inclusivist because of the *logos spermatikos* is his belief (shared with many Church Fathers) in the *prisca theologia*. The *prisca theologia* tradition asserted that many ancient sources received their knowledge of truth and reason from the Hebrew Scriptures. Justin attributed pagan myths to their origins in Hebrew oracles and texts which had been adapted by the Greeks and Romans. The Romans had "heard it proclaimed through the prophets that the Christ was yet to come," and under the influence of demons, they twisted these prophecies into their own mythical accounts.[25] Although "in the prophecy of Moses it had not been expressly intimated whether he who was to come was the Son of God," it was clear to Justin that Moses was "older than all writers" and those authors worked with a knowledge of Hebrew texts.[26] Justin asserted that Plato gained his knowledge of the world's creation from Moses, "the first prophet, and of greater antiquity than the Greek writers."[27] Plato partially perceived the arrival and suffering of Christ as well as the

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[23] Pinnock, 161.

[24] Pinnock, 162. The following argument distinguishing general and special revelation in Justin could be used to counter Pinnock's broader claims as well. If Noah and Job interacted with YHWH, were they not recipients of special revelation? If Cornelius was a God-fearer, had he not been exposed to "Israelite [or] Christian revelation?"

[25] Justin, *1 Apology* 54.

[26] Justin, *1 Apology* 54.

[27] Justin, *1 Apology* 59.

necessity of a third Person in the Godhead through Moses's teachings.[28] Such awareness of special revelation rules out the assumption that Justin believed the ancients were saved by responding to general revelation alone.

Whereas those before Christ had access to prophecies regarding Christ, those living during Justin's life were not without explicit revelation regarding the savior as well. Justin believed, "there is not one single race of men, whether Barbarians, or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads, or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus."[29] It would seem that Justin did not hold the notion of people groups who possessed "neither Israelite nor Christian revelation," as Pinnock argued. Most times when Justin cited pagans interacting with the revelation of the *logos*, he argued that those individuals received evidence from specific, public revelations and not general revelation through their conscience. Although prophecies were not explicit and some received revelation was disfigured by demons, these writings and stories originally derived from God's covenant communities. Thus, such recipients do not fit Sanders's and Pinnock's categories of faithful Gentiles or holy pagans.

Justin vehemently rejected the sufficiency of the pagans' understanding based on the *logos spermatikos* for true understanding apart from Christ. Not only did Justin downplay the nature of the Greeks' knowledge, he continued to correct false understandings: "For not only do we fearlessly read them, but, as you see, bring them for your inspection, knowing that their contents will be pleasing to all. And if we persuade even a few, our gain will be very great."[30] Although possessing what seem to be "seeds of truth," Justin fought these aberrant pagan writings because by propagating them the demons sought "to prevent men who read them from receiving knowledge of the good, and may retain them

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[28] Justin, *1 Apology* 59. See also McDermott and Netland, 117.

[29] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, A Jew* in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 117. The *Dialogue* is conspicuously absent in writings appealing to Justin as an early representative of inclusivism. Justin believed that even in the covenant community of Israel and with Old Testament revelation, Trypho was not saved.

[30] Justin, *1 Apology* 44.

in slavery to themselves."[31] Only two chapters before calling Socrates and Heraclitus "Christians," Justin wrote that Plato and others remained in slavery despite the *logos spermatikos* sown in them. This state contradicts the optimistic stance Pinnock and Sanders portrayed Justin to hold toward those pagans who held some knowledge and responded to it.

Logos Spermatikos *and the Whole Word*

Throughout the *Apologies*, Justin contrasted the *logos spermatikos* or the *logos* pagans had in part (*meros*) with the whole *logos* (*pantos logou*). The knowledge Christians had gained through the incarnation surpassed that of those who lived before or without the incarnation because Jesus as the *logos* provided a 'whole' revelation of God. While the *Apologies* were written to show the common ground between Christians and the Greco-Roman world which persecuted them, Justin steadfastly maintained the distinction between Greek philosophies and Christian truth. Christians agreed with pagans that judgment was impending, but Justin clarified that this judgment would take place "under Christ."[32] Again Justin qualified the contrast between philosophy and Christian doctrine: "On some points we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honour, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teaching."[33] This passage began a short section in *1 Apology* in which Justin contrasted Greek myths with true knowledge in Christ. The similarities evident between Christ and some Greek myths were not "because we say the same things as these writers said, but because we say true things."[34] Instead, "before [Jesus Christ the Word] became a man among men, some

[31] Justin, *1 Apology* 44. These writings, oracles of Sibyl and Hystaspes, were likely Persian fragments which early Christians erroneously supported as predictions of Christ. See *ANF*'s footnote regarding the oracles in Justin, *1 Apology* 20. This may be the "Sibyl" source Clement of Alexandria appealed to in Clement of Alexandria "The Stromata, or Miscellanies" in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 5.14; 6.5.

[32] Justin, *1 Apology* 8. Translation mine.

[33] Justin, *1 Apology* 20.

[34] Justin, *1 Apology* 23.

were influenced by evil demons."[35] Even when there were common points between Christianity and the Greeks, the Greeks' knowledge was tainted by demonic influence.[36]

In *2 Apology*, Justin employed seminal language to contrast knowledge prior to Christ with truth revealed by the incarnation. Although Justin disagreed with the Stoics' teachings regarding the destruction of creation, they possessed common morals with Christians because of the *logos spermatikos* in all humans. Reminiscent of *1 Apology*, Justin reminded readers that Greeks such as Heraclitus and Musonius were persecuted because of their moral lives. He explained, "The exposed demons work much more hatred for those not under the seminal word in part (*tous ou kata spermatikou logou meros*) but for those under the knowledge and contemplation of the whole word (*kata ten tou pantos logou*) which is Christ."[37] Once more, since the philosophers had only a part of the *logos* and not the fullness of the incarnation, Christian teaching was superior to the Greeks' knowledge. The result for the Greeks was confusion: "Whereas they did not know the whole of the Word, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves."[38] The *logos spermatikos* only gave knowledge in part, and this knowledge was contaminated by demons and led to evil works. Justin intimated that the initial reason he converted to Christianity was that Christianity did not disappoint him with contradictions like the other philosophies he followed.[39]

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[35] Justin, *1 Apology* 23. Again, Justin asserted, "It is not that we teach the same things as others but that speak in imitation of our teachings." Justin, *1 Apology* 60. Translations mine.

[36] Gerald Bray strongly rejected an optimistic reading of Justin. He explained, "Using the common philosophical language of the day, Justin referred to this indwelling Logos by the term *logos spermatikos*, and he did not hesitate to admit that Plato and the Stoics did the best they could with it. However, to conclude from this that Justin had a positive attitude toward the inheritance of Greek philosophy is a misreading of the facts." Gerald Bray, 'Explaining Christianity to Pagans: The Second-Century Apologists' in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 20.

[37] Justin, *2 Apology* 8. Translation mine.

[38] Justin, *2 Apology* 10. Likewise, "The right reason (*orthos logos*), having come, demonstrated that not all teachings nor all doctrines are beautiful. Instead some are indeed evil but some good." Justin, *2 Apology*, 9. Translations mine.

[39] Justin, *2 Apology* 13; Justin, *Dialogue* 2–8. James Sigountos highlighted Justin's critique, writing, "He commends every school for something, but, in the end, criticizes them all. He became a Christian, he says, not because of the

Contrary to Pinnock and Sanders, the *logos spermatikos* and any knowledge apart from the full revelation of Christ left individuals in need of more knowledge to be saved. Those who were persecuting Christians when they did not understand Christian doctrine "condemned themselves" because all humans have within them "the human nature to have knowledge of good and evil."[40] Justin claimed to have written *2 Apology* to expose aberrant theology (of Simon Magus and others) before all people "so that, if possible, they would be converted."[41] Justin wrote the *Apologies* to find common ground with pagans but also in hopes that they would find the true reason, the whole Word, Jesus. For this same reason, Justin called Trypho the Jew to salvation in the words of Christ.[42] The *logos spermatikos* brought revelation of God to all humans, but it was not sufficient for salvation. Justin cited the *logos spermatikos* to show why some pagans acted consistently with Christian moral values but not to affirm their salvation. Thus, Pinnock and Sanders misapplied Justin's doctrine when appealing to him as a theological inclusivist.

Pagan "Christians" in *1 Apology*

In addition to misappropriating Justin's concept of the *logos*, Pinnock and Sanders misinterpreted Justin's appellation of philosophers as Christians. This is the result of conflating the effects of the *logos spermatikos* and Justin's explicit statements in *1 Apology*

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agreements between Moses and Plato, but because of the differences." James G. Sigountos, 'Did Early Christians Believe Pagan Religions Could Save?' in *Through No Fault of their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard,* ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 235.

[40] Justin, *2 Apology* 14.

[41] Justin, *2 Apology* 15. He continued, "For this end alone did we compose this treatise. And our doctrines are not shameful, according to a sober judgment, but are indeed more lofty than all human philosophy." Translation mine.

[42] He wrote, "Moreover, I would wish that all, making a resolution similar to my own, do not keep themselves away from the words of the Saviour (*tou soteros logon*). For they possess a terrible power in themselves, and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; while the sweetest rest is afforded those who make a diligent practice of them. If, then, you have any concern for yourself, and if you are eagerly looking for salvation (*antipoie soterias*), and if you believe in God, you may—since you are not indifferent to the matter—become acquainted with the Christ of God." Justin, *Dialogue* 8.

calling ancient figures "Christians." In the key passage Pinnock quoted at length to support general revelation inclusivism, Justin wrote:

> We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word (*logos*) of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably (*hoi meta logou biosantes*) are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them.[43]

Although related, the revelation provided to all humans by the *logos spermatikos* does not cause those who place faith in the *logos* to become Christians. Instead, living with reason is the condition by which these figures are deemed Christian. Justin did not say these individuals received God's grace or were saved. Rather, he simply called them "Christians." As seen above, Pinnock argued that this passage and the "holy pagans" described in the Bible "all stand as positive proof that the grace of God touches people all over the world and that faith, without which it is impossible to please God, can and does occur outside as well as inside the formal covenant communities."[44] By examining Justin's occasion and strategy in writing *1 Apology*, it will be shown that he was not arguing that Socrates, Heraclitus, and others were saved on the basis of faith in response to the general revelation of the *logos*.

The Occasion of *1 Apology*

1 Apology was written as a petition "in behalf of those of all nations who are unjustly hated and wantonly abused, myself [Justin] being one of them."[45] Justin addressed the petition to Emperor Antoninus Pius, his son Marcus Aurelius (called Verissimus the Philosopher in *1 Apol.* 1), and his adopted son Lucius Verus (also called the Philosopher). In the document, Justin repeatedly appealed to the rational senses of the Roman rulers. According to Justin, Christians were being persecuted for no reason other than their name. Justin reasoned this to be an unjust practice because names do not deserve condemnation, only actions. He argued, "By the mere application of a name, nothing is decided, either

[43] Justin, *1 Apology* 46. Pinnock erroneously cited this passage as chapter 14. Pinnock, 162. Sanders also quoted the above. Sanders, 239.

[44] Pinnock, 162.

[45] Justin, *1 Apology* 1.

good or evil, apart from the actions implied in the name. . . . For from a name neither praise nor punishment could reasonably spring, unless something excellent or base in action be proved."[46] Justin urged the rulers to investigate the accusations against Christians so that they may be exonerated and so that false accusers may be exposed.[47] *1 Apology*, then, was written as a defense against unreasonable accusations.

James Sigountos clarified Justin and other early apologists' writings: "Their purpose, however, was twofold: to defend themselves from pagan attack and to ingratiate themselves with their pagan neighbors. They merely wanted to show that they were good neighbors, not the cannibals or sexual profligates that some gossip-mongers had said they were."[48] Rumors such as cannibalism (a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper) and sexual immorality (a misrepresentation of early Christian 'love feasts') spurred the persecution of Christians without thorough investigation. No accusation against Christians, however, was as severe as the charge of atheism. Goodenough consolidated the task of the second-century Christian apologist into two defenses: against immorality and against philosophical disdain. In *1 Apology*, Justin attempted "at the outset to clear away the social and ethical reproaches that he may thus be free to deal with Christianity as a system of thought and guide of life."[49] In defending Christians against these moral and philosophical charges, Justin adopted two strategies.

First, Justin positively stated Christian moral beliefs. *1 Apology* 15–17 includes a short exposition of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and other moral lessons taught by Christ. Justin vehemently opposed the practices of "exposing" children, prostitution, and sexual promiscuity.[50] For all the popular accusations made against Christians as a body, the pagans were the ones engaged in such behavior through their cultic rituals (prostitution, mutilation, mur-

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[46] Justin, *1 Apology* 4.

[47] Justin, *1 Apology* 7.

[48] Sigountos, 237.

[49] Goodenough, 101.

[50] Justin, *1 Apology* 27. He added, "But whether we marry, it is only that we may bring up children; or whether we decline marriage, we live continently." Justin, *1 Apology* 29.

der).[51] Instead of mysterious immoral practices by which they sought to usurp Rome's power, Justin asserted that Christians were openly seeking peace, justice, and God's government over creation.[52]

Second, Justin appealed to past heroes the Greco-Roman world embraced who had similar beliefs. Justin justified the Christian belief in judgment by appealing to Plato.[53] On the charge of atheism, Justin enlisted Socrates. If Christians were labeled atheists and suffered because they did not worship the Greco-Roman pantheon of deities, they were no different than the ancient philosopher.[54] Justin asserted that the gods were demonic entities who had twisted truth in the minds of their followers. The reason which compelled Christians to reject the gods was the same reason which led Socrates to reject the gods.[55] If Christians held doctrines similar to those of Plato and the Stoics, Justin asked, "Why

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[51] "Indeed, the things which you do openly and with applause, as if the divine light were overturned and extinguished, these you lay to our charge." Justin, *1 Apology* 27.

[52] Justin, *1 Apology* 9–10.

[53] Justin, *1 Apology* 8.

[54] Some scholars have emphasized the suffering of those Justin mentioned in *1 Apology* 46 at the hands of unreasonable persecutors as the primary parallel between these pagans and Christians. "Significantly these had all (with the possible exception of Abraham) opposed idolatry. Again, all had suffered as a result of this opposition. Justin clearly saw their situations as parallel to that of Christians in his own day." Graham A. Keith, "Justin Martyr and Religious Exclusivism" in *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Andrew D. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Paternoster, 1992), 166. Likewise, Sigountos wrote, "Justin never said that sincere worshipers of non-Christian deities are Christians. He merely affirms that some throughout human history have stood up to the demonic deception of pagan religion. And he likewise affirms that all who challenged the status quo have paid dearly." Sigountos, 233.

[55] "And when Socrates endeavoured, by true reason and examination, to bring these things to light, and deliver men from the demons, then the demons themselves, by means of men who rejoiced in iniquity, compassed his death, as an atheist and a profane person, on the charge that 'he was introducing new divinities;' and in our case they display a similar activity. For not only among the Greeks did reason (Logos) prevail to condemn these things through Socrates, but also among the Barbarians were they condemned by Reason (or the Word, the Logos) Himself, who took shape, and became man, and was called Jesus Christ." Justin, *1 Apology* 5. Justin made this same point in the key passage: "Those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists." Op. cit., 46.

are we unjustly hated more than all others?"[56] Justin's purpose throughout *1 Apology* was to question the unfair treatment of Christians and show that they were moral individuals and not unlike Greco-Roman heroes.

The Meaning of "Christian" in *1 Apology*

Early in *1 Apology*, using wordplay, Justin claimed that if the accusations against Christians (*christianoi*) were actually investigated, they would be found worthy of their name since they were morally upright individuals (*chrestianoi*). Justin declared, "So far at least as one may judge from the name we are accused of, we are most excellent people (*chrestotatoi*). . . . For we are accused of being Christians (*christianoi*) and to hate what is excellent (*chreston*) is unjust."[57] Since Justin sought to establish the morality of Christians in *1 Apology*, such wordplay is not surprising. The connection of moral works to the name "Christian," however, must not be understated.

Throughout *1 Apology*, Justin identified the name Christian with those who exhibited moral works. Justin insisted that upholding Christian doctrine meant nothing if a person was found not living according to the teachings of Jesus: "Let them not be known as Christians."[58] In *1 Apology* 7, Justin argued that many Greeks called themselves philosophers because they fancied their opinions wise. This, however, does not remove the distinction between those who are actually wise and those who only seem wise. Likewise, individuals who are called Christians but do not live the Christian life are not Christians at all.[59] Justin reprised this argument later when denouncing Simon Magus, Meander, and Marcion. These heretics were "called Christians" (*christianoi kalountai*) just as some were called philosophers despite disagreeing with established wisdom. Before referring to his apology against the heretics (now lost), Justin emphasized his ignorance regarding their moral standing.

At every juncture, Justin insisted that the name "Christian" depended on the moral practice of the individual. Justin equated the

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[56] Justin, *1 Apology* 20. For background on Justin's appeals see Goodenough, 105–10; Sigountos, 233–34.

[57] Justin, *1 Apology* 4.

[58] Justin, *1 Apology* 16.

[59] Justin, *1 Apology* 7. Again, "As to those who are not living pursuant to these His teachings, and are Christians only in name, we demand that all such be punished by you." Op. cit., 16.

name "Christian" with an adjective meaning morally excellent. Those who were "called Christian" but did not live according to the teachings of Christ did not fit the name. Justin's language regarding the *logos spermatikos* and the blatant appellation of pagans as Christians in chapter 46 must be interpreted likewise. All families of humanity participated in the *logos* even before the incarnation. Thus, God's creative and ordering power was not only available but present with all humans, and "the ones who lived with reason are Christians" (*hoi meta logou biosantes christianoi*).[60] The criteria for being called a Christian is evident in this passage. After listing several candidates, Justin said there were "many others," and he refrained from mentioning their names or "deeds." Further, those who rejected the *logos* before Christ were described: they who "lived lives apart from reason were worthless people."[61]

Contrary to Pinnock's holy pagan argument, Justin was not concerned with a faith response, only acting in accordance with reason. In attempting to endear persecuted Christians to the Roman powers, Justin identified Christianity with moral living. Justin defended Christians against accusations of immorality and foolishness. To argue that Christians were committed to obedience and true reason, Justin presented a new understanding of the name "Christian." So far as Socrates and other ancients the Romans approved of acted in accordance with true reason, they could be called Christian. When inclusivists appeal to *1 Apology* 46 in connection with Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* to corroborate general revelation inclusivism, they ignore the apologetic occasion and the use of the name "Christian" unique to *1 Apology*. This document was written to show why Christians should not be persecuted, and common ground with the Greek greats demonstrated that Christians should be accepted since works consistent with Christianity were celebrated previously in that culture.

Salvation in *1 Apology*

The polemical arguments Justin made regarding Christian salvation are further evidence against understanding him as a proponent of general revelation inclusivism. Consistently, Justin argued that moral works proved a person worthy of the name "Christian." Does this mean Justin promoted works-based salvation? No. A

[60] Justin, *1 Apology* 46. Translation mine.
[61] Justin, *1 Apology* 46. Translation mine.

thorough reading of *1 Apology* shows that Justin believed Christians held to doctrines which provided salvation apart from works. Justin viewed the *logos spermatikos* as incomplete, marred by demonic forces, and superseded by knowledge of the whole *logos*. Although Christianity and Greco-Roman morals may have shared common ground, Christians had more complete knowledge as well as God's grace. These arguments make clear that while Socrates and others could be called "Christian" in Justin's apologetic usage, they were not saved by their works or response to the *logos spermatikos*.

The immediate context of the key passage cited by Pinnock and Sanders was the establishment of responsibility for those who lived before Christ. Even given all the prophecies which foretold the incarnation of the *logos*, Justin anticipated the possibility that some "should cry out against us as though all men who were born before Him were irresponsible."[62] Surely those who lived before Christ were not guilty simply by ignoring the *logos spermatikos*. Contrary to the general argument of his essay rejecting inclusivism in the early church, Sigountos concluded,

> By stating that the Logos had granted a "seed" of understanding to everyone, and that a few Greeks and a large number of "barbarians" (i.e., Israelites) had lived in accordance with the Logos, Justin shows that all had a fair chance even before Christ came. The *logos spermatikos*, limited and fragmented as it was, allowed some to become Christians.[63]

This conclusion falls to the same overall difficulty with Pinnock's and Sanders's positions in that the rest of Justin's chapter following the appellation of Socrates and Heraclitus is directed explicitly at those who *rejected* the *logos spermatikos*. Justin wrote, "So that even they who lived before Christ, and lived without reason, were wicked and hostile to Christ."[64] In neither *1 Apology* 46 nor any other passage in the *Apologies* did Justin attribute the positive benefit of salvation to pagans who lived with reason. He only attributed the negative consequences of judgment to those who rejected and live without reason.

Justin did insinuate that in human nature as originally created, individuals could be called to faith through reason. God created

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[62] Justin, *1 Apology* 46.
[63] Sigountos, 172.
[64] Justin, *1 Apology* 46.

humans according to *logos*, and "if men by their works show themselves worthy of this His design, they are deemed worthy, and so we have received—of reigning in company with Him, being delivered from corruption and suffering."[65] Justin wrote that in the beginning, humans could have chosen acts worthy of God's design so that "through the rational powers which he has bestowed, he convinces and leads us to faith."[66] All humans were charged to act in accordance with the rational powers. An obstacle to these rational powers, however, arose. Justin continued, "For the things which human laws were unable to accomplish, the *logos*, being divine, would have performed these, if not for the wicked demons."[67] Although the *logos* is obstructed by the demons and humans cannot perform worthy of God's design through their deeds, Christians are counted worthy through baptism, prayer, and the Eucharist.[68] Baptism in response to the message of Christ, instead of works, Justin wrote, was "for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration."[69]

Conclusion

Justin Martyr's *1 Apology* was written to defend Christian belief and practice in a time when Christians were suffering persecution at the hands of the Romans: "Though we say things similar to what the Greeks say, we only are hated on account of the name of Christ, and though we do no wrong, are put to death as sinners."[70] Justin's strategy in justifying Christianity was to show that they lived consistently with ancient Greco-Roman heroes. The ancients and Christians shared a common *logos* by which they lived morally.

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[65] Justin, *1 Apology* 10. Note, as discussed above, the condition of works and not faith in some cosmic principle.

[66] Justin, *1 Apology* 10. Translation mine.

[67] Justin, *1 Apology* 10. Translation mine.

[68] Justin, *1 Apology* 65. Note the passive tense of the verb.

[69] Justin, *1 Apology* 66. Gerald Bray contrasted baptism with reason and works in Justin's theology: "It was not merely intellectual ignorance, but spiritual slavery that had to be dealt with if humans were to be saved and truly enlightened. It was Justin who made this point most clearly when he concluded the First Book of his *Apology* with a short discourse on the necessity and the importance of Christian baptism. . . . Baptism, which only the Christian Church could offer, was thus presented as the only way in which a Gentile could enter into the grace of God in Christ, however much the Gentile may have learned from the presence of the Logos in him or her." Bray, 24.

[70] Justin, *1 Apology* 24.

Christians were not immoral monsters. Instead, they held a more complete knowledge of the *logos* because they had found him in Jesus Christ. Clark Pinnock and John Sanders claimed that by affirming the *logos spermatikos* which revealed God's moral reason to humans in all times, Justin believed that individuals before Christ and those who had not heard of Christ could be saved. This article has shown that Justin's appellation of certain pagans as Christians was a unique apologetic argument in the context of *1 Apology*. Pinnock and Sanders misapplied Justin's doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* to salvation and misinterpreted Justin's appellation in *1 Apology*.

At their root, Pinnock's and Sanders's conclusion that Justin affirmed the salvation of pagans is the result of a superficial reading whereby they confused the accessibility of revelation and the accessibility of salvation.[71] Pinnock wrote, "Access to salvation for all was realized by a 'logos' doctrine which theologians like Justin Martyr . . . entertained."[72] Aside from *1 Apology* 46, scholars are hard-pressed to show any link between the *logos spermatikos* and the accessibility of salvation since Justin's tone toward revelation apart from the incarnation was overwhelmingly negative. The confusion between the accessibility of revelation and salvation is characteristic of contemporary general revelation inclusivism as a whole.

For Justin Martyr, possession of divine revelation is a necessary but insufficient condition of salvation. He repeatedly noted the incomplete nature of the *logos spermatikos* and clearly articulated the true means of obtaining forgiveness: baptism in response to the teachings about Christ. The appellation of pre-Christ individuals as "Christians" was an apologetic strategy by which Justin sought to gain acceptance for Christians. In *1 Apology*, Justin identified "Christians" as those who exhibited moral works as part of wordplay to validate persecuted Christians in the Roman world. The *logos spermatikos* sown in all humans upheld the moral responsibility of all whereas only the full revelation of the *logos* as Christ provided God's grace. *1 Apology* is a testament itself that Justin expected those utilizing wisdom and reason to still be under God's judg-

[71] Graham Keith critiqued this admission based on Justin's warnings against the demons' influence throughout Greek culture. Keith, 185.

[72] Pinnock, 36.

ment.[73] As such, Justin Martyr is not a compelling precursor to general revelation inclusivism as argued by Clark Pinnock and John Sanders.

[73] Justin, *1 Apology* 1–2, 68. Justin acknowledged the Roman rulers' philosophical standing and abilities to reason while condemning their present injustice and God's impending judgment.

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Reflections from the Director

Robert B. Stewart, PhD

Bob Stewart recently retired and now serves as professor emeritus of philosophy and theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Greer-Heard Forum began with a conversation I had with Charlie Harvey, who was at that time teaching for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Charlie and I met in the fall of 1998, when I was a first-semester faculty member, teaching full-time and finishing my dissertation. I casually mentioned that I thought it would be interesting to get two world-class scholars of different persuasions to come together to dialogue on an important topic in theology, apologetics, or culture. He enthusiastically agreed. I said that if I could do that, I would have John Dominic Crossan, the co-chair of the Jesus Seminar, and N. T. Wright, the evangelical Anglican Bishop of Durham, to dialogue on the historical Jesus. I knew both of them because I'd written my dissertation (at that time I was still writing the dissertation) on how their hermeneutical presuppositions influenced their historical Jesus research. Because both Crossan and Wright were actively writing, both had the opportunity to read what I wrote about them. I found them both to be gracious, and fortunately for me both said that I represented them accurately, and they even offered helpful suggestions. That was it; a one-off conversation about a far-fetched idea that I quickly forgot about. Little did I know how that conversation would impact my life and academic career. As a first-semester, tenure-track instructor I had no leverage or influence to make the idea a reality. Neither did Charlie at that point. At the time Charlie was a professor of Collegiate Ministry and was also responsible for all "events" on campus. (Given that the forum was a series of "events" one might think that Charlie was in position to make it happen, but that would be to misunderstand his role at that time. He was in charge of managing events; neither of us had the authority to initiate or approve events.) Providentially, soon after that conversation, Charlie became the Vice President for Institutional Advancement, a position in which he was tasked with coordinating with the seminary president in raising money!

Enter Bill Heard, a long-time seminary donor who was looking into new ways to make his charitable donations. Understandably Charlie wanted to keep Bill as an NOBTS donor. So he proposed a number of ideas to Bill, most of which were met with a lukewarm response. Eventually Charlie remembered our conversation and asked Bill what he thought about the idea of John Dominic Crossan debating N. T. Wright. That lit a fire in Bill, as he was an admirer of Crossan—although Bill didn't necessarily agree with him. Bill loved seminary students but feared that students weren't being equipped to think critically through controversial theological or cultural issues. He and I agreed that bringing together the best minds on a subject to dialogue on issues publicly would be a great way to begin to address his concern. As a result, Bill endowed the Greer-Heard Chair of Faith and Culture, which I occupied for two decades, and also gave $125,000 for a five-year pilot program of point-counterpoint forums, which also bore the name Greer-Heard. (Bill and his wife, Carolyn Greer Heard, named the chair and the forum in honor of their parents.) Apparently, Bill was pleased with the pilot program—he funded the forum for an additional nine years! Bill swore that he would never endow the forum because he feared that it would become something he wouldn't approve of after he died. One example of that very sort of thing happening is the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina. The school's charter reads that it is for a "Christian Gentleman Scholar." Today the agnostic New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman holds it.

Why Dialogue is Valuable

A particular experience comes to mind. It was during a round of golf with a pastor in North Carolina. He asked me what I did, and I told him that I taught Philosophy and Theology at NOBTS and also directed the Apologetics program and the Greer-Heard Forum. After explaining to him what the Greer-Heard Forum was, he said, "Why would you want to do that?" I probed him as to what lay behind his question. It soon became clear that he thought that all we Christians should do is preach the Bible and leave the results to God; we didn't need to engage the culture in dialogue or debate. As frustrating and emotionally troubling as this experience was, I do think that we should have reasons for ministering in the ways that we do. I believed in the Greer-Heard Forum then, and I

believe in something like it today, because I believe that there is value in dialogue.

There are many positive things that dialogue can do. *Dialogue ensures that both sides present a strong case for their respective positions.* By bringing together world-class scholars, the Greer-Heard forum ensured that audiences were presented with strong arguments from both sides. We too easily believe that a position is correct when we hear only one side of the story. That's not possible in a dialogue.

Dialogue can strengthen our faith. We often hold certain beliefs because people we trust have told us that they are true. Other times we have investigated the issue and attempted to arrive at the truth, but we have limited ability to investigate such issues. Having an expert present a reasoned case that is better informed, supported, and stated than our own efforts strengthens our beliefs—or challenges them accordingly. In other words, one benefit of dialogue is that it deepens our conviction and faith in Christ by providing us with different and better reasons to believe.

Perhaps a story will make this clear. Driving home from speaking at a church in Mississippi one Sunday evening I stopped for dinner at restaurant. While waiting on my meal, a young man approached me and asked, "Are you Dr. Stewart?" I answered that I was. He then proceeded to tell me that he had attended one of the forums when he had been doubting his faith, but that after that forum his faith was restored. He thanked me and said he would be praying for me and the forum. How gratifying that was to hear.

Dialogue helps us better understand our faith and the rational basis upon which it is grounded. Having our faith challenged forces us to seek to explain why we believe what we believe. In other words, we are pressed to consider objections, and thus pushed to understand our positions at a deeper level. An analogy would be the way in which I learned my native tongue, English, better by studying Koine Greek. I grew up speaking English, and a little German, but never actually took a deep dive into the grammatical and linguistic foundations of either language—until I studied Greek in seminary. I remember leaving class saying to myself, "A participle is an *ing-word*, an infinitive is a *to-word*, a definitive article is a *the-word*, etc." I had absolutely no idea what an anarthrous sentence or a periphrastic construction was. In other words, I learned English better by studying another language. In the same way, we learn our own beliefs better by studying those opposed to them. Perhaps another

example will further explain this. Students born into Christian homes take the doctrine of the Trinity for granted. Not so for those raised as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Muslims. Additionally, those seeking to evangelize non-Trinitarian groups are forced to dig down deep to the basis for our beliefs about our God. Dialogue pushes us to re-examine our own faith, and we emerge better for having done so.

Dialogue destroys strawmen. I sometimes encounter amateur apologists that present facile arguments which destroy positions that probably few skeptics actually hold. Yet those amateur apologists believe that somehow they have demonstrated the undeniable truth of the Christian worldview. Sometimes those on both sides of an issue are surprised by the plausibility of a position for which they previously thought there were no serious arguments. (When I say a "serious" argument, I don't mean a sound argument or even a persuasive argument. I mean an argument, whether formally expressed or not, that is logically valid[1] and should be taken seriously.) The Greer-Heard forum offered serious arguments in answer to serious questions.

Dialogues like the Greer-Heard Forum go several levels deep. Although the presentation format was unique every year, depending on the subject and the dialogue partners, the list below describes generally how many levels deep the forum went.

1. Both initial positions were stated in opening addresses/papers.
2. Both dialogue partners were then allowed to reply to the other's position.
3. Both dialogue partners had an opportunity to clarify their position and to answer their interlocutor's position or criticism of their position.
4. In some forums there was a period of conversation between the dialogue partners to explain more fully their respective positions and to probe the other's position, and also to discuss related issues.
5. Each dialogue partner had the opportunity to conclude.
6. All this was followed by Q&A with the audience.

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[1] I am well aware that people often use the word "valid" as a synonym for true. That is most definitely not what I mean. Logical validity deals with the form of the argument, not the content. No invalid argument is sound, even if its conclusion is true.

7. Because the forum was a two-day event, we were able to have additional scholars make presentations or read papers on issues related to the theme of the conference. This allowed those attending to think not only more deeply on an issue but also more broadly about that issue. Generally, there were four second-day speakers, two that agreed more or less with one dialogue partner, and two that agreed more or less with the other. In this way, the forum was not unfairly tilted to one position or the other.
8. The second-day presentations were followed by the dialogue partners responding to, and in some cases, dialoguing with the second-day presenter. Usually the dialogue partner who disagreed more with the second-day presenter spoke more than the dialogue partner who agreed more with the second-day presenter (sometimes both had points of disagreement to discuss with the presenter).
9. The second-day presenters each had an opportunity to give his or her concluding thoughts on the matter.
10. At the end of the second day, there was a concluding thoughts section. Sometimes it was limited to the two main dialogue partners, other times every speaker got a chance to conclude in some fashion. Sometimes, this section included another time for audience Q&A.

The benefits of such sustained interaction on an issue are enormous.

Relationships can be formed. One thing that made the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum different than a simple debate series was that there was a lot of informal down-time, usually shared around meals. A dialogue like Greer-Heard, where dialogue partners have the opportunity to share a number of meals together, also benefits the dialogue partners. They get to know their counterparts as human beings, not simply contrary talking points. Also, they can discuss other scholarly issues that were not related to the conference.

As a result of the forum, I was given invitations to speak to audiences that otherwise would never have heard a Christian state the Christian position. After the third dialogue, which featured the late Daniel Dennett and Alister McGrath on the topic of "The Future of Atheism," I was invited to speak to the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA). Dennett was surprised to hear Dr. Kelley explain how Southern Baptists have historically

been defenders of free speech and soul freedom. We believe in conversation and persuasion, not coercion. After that forum, NOSHA asked me to speak on things that Southern Baptists and Secular Humanists had in common. I took the opportunity to lay out some things on which we agreed, but then also listed some things that we disagreed on, and why. After the meeting, two ladies who had come to the meeting shared with me that they agreed with me on the existence of God and the objectivity of truth, and thanked me for coming. During the Q&A portion of the meeting, the president of NOSHA actually corrected one NOSHA member's misunderstanding of Pascal's wager!

Another conversation that comes to mind from that year was my opportunity to tell Daniel Dennett that I hoped that he would give his life to Jesus. He responded that he was an atheist because he thought that Darwinism logically led to atheism (I think that position is demonstrably false). However, he said that he wasn't interested in the debates about Darwin's personal life, such as what his religious or political beliefs were. He just wanted everyone to read Darwin's books and appreciate his genius. He then asked, "Why can't Christians be that way about Jesus?" My reply was, "We can't be that way about Jesus because Jesus himself said that he was the way, the truth, and the life, and that nobody came to the Father but through him." Dennett seemed startled to learn that. These are but a few of the benefits of dialogue.

The Challenge of Assessing a Dialogue

One of the questions that I have been asked many times over the years concerning the forum is, "Who won the debate?" This is a difficult question to answer. First, not every year was a "debate." Each year was an event unto itself. Some years genuinely were dialogues, i.e., conversations between scholars where they laid out and defended their respective views. Other years were certainly more debate than dialogue. (In fact, some years the dialogue was between two orthodox Christians!)

Second, assessing the "winner" of a debate is a subjective matter. Nobody comes to a dialogue/debate without some presuppositions. Those presuppositions frame the question and thus influence how one answers. We all have presuppositions—presuppositions are not just things that other people have. On more than one occasion I have been told by conservative, well-educated Christians for whom I have great respect that they have

a different take on a particular forum than I have. That's okay. I am a critical realist, and I am open to revising my beliefs when given sufficient evidence and/or reason to do so. I hope that I always seek truth rather than one position over against another.

Third, sometimes your assessment of who won a debate will depend on how closely you pay attention and/or how often you observe it. You might think that as the director of the forum I would be well-positioned to answer that question—after all, I was there for every minute of all of them. But because I was the director I was involved in every aspect of the forum, not simply the dialogue or papers. Sometimes my mind was not focused on the actual dialogue at all because I was thinking about the reception to follow, or some technical aspect, like the sound or lighting, or how much time was left for a speaker—and if a speaker went over the allotted time, when to interrupt. Other times I was communicating with one of the team as to other issues. I had so many details to coordinate and integrate.

In transcribing the Friday evenings for publication I sometimes realized that my impression of which speaker did better was different when viewing it on the page than it was when hearing it live in the room. On at least three occasions my opinion changed after editing the transcript.

Fourth, one's assessment of a debate is dependent upon how much knowledge of the field one has. People often confuse rhetoric with reason, and mistake charisma for accuracy. One year I asked a large class the week after the forum their thoughts on the event. A large percentage of them said that one of the speakers was "a great communicator." When I asked them what his best point was, they could not tell me. I asked them how he could be a great communicator if, less than a week after the forum, they couldn't remember what he communicated. He was a bigger-than-life personality, full of charm, who could command a room, but that is not the same as communicating. I did not share their opinion. I found his arguments to be unclear and not tightly reasoned. I was strongly of the opinion that the less charismatic dialogue partner had the better arguments then, and I remain convinced of that today. I could be wrong and my students could be right, but I seriously doubt it. One thing is obvious, both positions can't be true; either he was a great communicator or he was not. Rhetoric will not negate the law of non-contradiction.

Lessons Learned the Hard Way

I had a pretty clear general idea what I wanted the Greer-Heard Forum to be from the beginning, but over the years they came to run more smoothly than they had at first. In large part this was because I learned over time some things that needed to be done—and some things not to do again.

One thing that I knew from the beginning was that the forum could not be successful if the non-evangelical speakers thought that it was not fair. I had to treat those that I, as an evangelical and a Southern Baptist, disagreed with as well as well as those with whom I agreed. On more than one occasion I've had the non-evangelicals thank me for my fairness. This would be especially important when seeking a publisher to publish books from the forum. In fact, the two publishers that have published books from the forum (Fortress Press and Westminster John Knox Press) both identify as "liberal" Christian publishers. I am quite happy to have published the fruit of the forum in liberal venues because the readers that I most want to reach usually don't read books published by evangelical publishers—although I've found that evangelical scholars have no qualms about reading books written or published by liberals. That evangelical scholars read non-evangelicals can be seen from this experience. During one of NOBTS' annual Defend Apologetics Conference, a plenary speaker thanked me for editing a book that came from the forum, and said that it had been of great use to her in understanding and responding to some of the claims made by Bart Ehrman.[2]

I must add here that working with both Fortress and Westminster John Knox has been a pleasure. They both are high-quality publishers who have treated me very well.

I'm often asked, "Which forum was your favorite?" That's a difficult question to answer. It's like being asked, "Which of your children is your favorite?" In some ways the first several forums were my favorite. In large part I think that is because they were such an adrenaline rush. The 2005 forum, featuring Wright and Crossan, on the subject of the resurrection of Jesus, was the best-attended forum. In part that was because it was in conjunction with the Southwest regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society that year. On the other hand, the 2014 forum, featuring

[2] Robert B. Stewart, The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart Ehrman and Daniel Wallace in Dialogue (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

William Lane Craig and Sean Carroll, on the subject of God and Cosmology, was the most-watched. The reason is that it was streamed all over the world. The company that we used to stream it calculated that over 100,000 devices (not viewers—devices) were tuned in to the dialogue. We had viewers from every continent. But some of my favorite memories are from private conversations with speakers and others that took place during one forum or the other. I have many fond memories of good meals and good music (we typically went out to dinner and jazz after the forums had wrapped up).

The second year in particular stands out in my mind. We had planned everything out but Hurricane Katrina changed that. We literally had no campus for the 2005-2006 academic year. So many lost so much that year. I actually had no idea what to do, and things like getting our children in school, replacing vehicles and other property, and teaching online were of paramount importance to me during the fall of 2005. Enter William Lane Craig. Bill Craig called me to see how we were doing and to ask about the forum. In our conversation he mentioned that he was a member of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church (JFBC) in the Atlanta area. He said that their staff frequently put on world-class conferences, and that he would be happy to see if they would be interested in partnering with NOBTS to host the forum that year. The seminary administration had relocated to the Atlanta area during that year (although my family was living in Fort Worth, Texas). I investigated the situation and recommended to the president, Dr. Kelley, and the provost, Dr. Lemke, that we should take JFBC up on their offer to host the conference. They agreed. Providentially, JFBC is located in Cobb County, Georgia—the site of one of the most significant court cases concerning Intelligent Design—and the theme of the forum that year was Intelligent Design. To make a long story short, we had one of our best-attended forums that year despite all the surrounding chaos.

We never had a forum without some surprises. Early on many surprises were because I didn't know what I was doing. Things ran more smoothly as time went along, because I learned some lessons the hard way. For instance, I learned that I had to play bad cop during the Q&A at times. The first year about half of the questions weren't truly questions as much as audience members wanting to lecture one of the speakers or the audience. After the

first year, I had directions for the Q&A. I would typically say something like:

> You've been told that there's no such thing as a stupid question; that's not true! So make sure that your question is something that everyone would benefit from having answered in public. Otherwise, there will be time for you to ask your question during the book-signing at the reception or tomorrow. Also, make sure that your question actually is a question. We have paid scholars to come speak to us. So, ask yourself, am I paid to be here? If you're not, then you're welcome to ask a question but not to lecture. Third, ask your question in thirty seconds or less, and then step back or sit down. We don't want follow-up questions, unless the speaker you asked asks you a question. Finally, at Greer-Heard we follow Robert's Rules of Order. My name is Robert; I make the rules.

I also learned that we had to have an official timer. Every year the two dialogue partners and I agreed on a detailed format as to who would speak when and for how long. But the first few years we didn't actually have a timer, and thus sometimes deviated from the script. Eventually we came up with a system that kept the speakers well informed as to how much time they had left, and that problem was solved.

Another lesson that I learned was that everyone wants to speak to the stars. We always had a reception and book-signing after the Friday night dialogue. But I had to learn to have escorts to take the speakers from the chapel to the cafeteria for the reception; otherwise the speakers would be besieged by people asking questions or for autographs, among other things.

Closing Thoughts

Every now and then I am asked if the Greer-Heard Forum wasn't really very risky. The question typically betrays some anxiety about giving very smart, very well-educated non-evangelicals a platform to express their opinions. Lurking behind that concern, I think, is a fear that the Bible might not be true. We never have to fear the truth. Dr. Chuck Kelley put it well on more than one occasion: "The sincere search for truth will always end at the feet of Jesus." I thank God for Bill Heard, Charlie Harvey, Chuck Kelley, all those who spoke at the forum, and all those who worked to

make it happen. I hope this journal encourages you and prods you to seek the truth, and by doing so to end up at the feet of Jesus.

Soli Deo Gloria

JBTM 21.2 (Fall 2024): 323–56

Book Reviews

Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity. By William David Spencer. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2022. 242 pages. Paperback, $19.99.

In *Three in One*, William Spencer analyzes images for the Trinity by highlighting the good, warning about the misleading, and suggesting what each image can teach about God's nature (5). Spencer is Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston campus. He holds degrees from Rutgers (BA), Princeton Seminary (MDiv and ThM), and Boston School of Theology (ThD).

Spencer is interested in how one explains the inexplicable Trinity (8). He stresses that "God is so totally other that our Creator is beyond our comprehension" (5, 36). His approach is to describe the Trinity in illustrations that are qualified so as to make helpful connections without adding confusion (42). Next, Spencer answers the question: Did Jesus use images to teach about God? Even though it baffled his disciples, Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables (Matt. 13:10, 35). Jesus was a master orator who used puns, personification, hyperbole, and synecdoche to speak about himself and God. Jesus used images from everyday life: carpentry, fishing, farming, shepherding, cooking, family, finance, and governing.

Spencer then focuses on the images of light and the sun. He notes that "the emphasis here is the sun as source and its properties as distinct but unified with it" (79). Jesus is the light of all people and the light that shines in the darkness (John 1:4). He then concentrates on the image of light in Hebrews 1:3. The writer of Hebrews identifies the Son of God as "the radiance" of God's glory. This image implies that "God the Father is like the sun in the sky. Jesus, as God-Among-Us, is like the radiance of the sun, entering our midst giving us life and new life, illuminating us with God's knowledge, and lighting the right path so our feet will not stumble" (100). Spencer summarizes that "a proper understanding of Hebrews 1:3's lesson of light underscores this truth: like comes from like" (126).

Next, Spencer analyzes images that move and change. The water images (like water-ice-steam) are "attractive, kinetic, living, and vibrant, but at the same time they suggest that their modes are not permanent" (132). This leads to a heresy known as modalism, "making God one being in three roles rather than one being in three distinct persons" (137). The water image does "provide an illustration of shared equality, showing that three can be one substance" (137). Spencer also surveys nonhuman images that are static and have three parts: topography, egg, shamrock, tools/products with three parts, nature, and totem pole versus Celtic knot. He concludes that these images can run both the risk of presenting the Godhead as three parts comprising a whole (138) and the risk of presenting the one great, personal, living God as impersonal (144). At the same time, they can help illustrate "three components in a unified whole of a single identity" (151).

Spencer then surveys static human images: tripartite human beings or a club or society, the branches of government, an army, and a business. These images do portray plurality in unity, and yet some of these can lean towards tritheism or subordinationism (159, 161). Spencer examines the image of God as a divine family too. He argues that God is a spirit and does not marry. The benefit of the family image is "the interconnectedness of love among the three persons of the Trinity, a wondrous love that extends to bless humans" (198). In closing, Spencer reiterates that images and illustrations as analogies have been used by Christians for thousands of years to try to span the communication gap with unbelievers. He writes that "some of these illustrations are obvious, others subtle, but all are analogous to some truth about God's nature" (200). Spencer cautions readers that an image contains one or more points of similarity with the Trinity, and the meaning of the image should be limited to these points.

Three in One has two clear strengths. This work is very culturally relevant. Spencer has served in urban ministry for more than fifty-five years, and he has taught systematic theology for more than forty years. He has compiled surveys from his theological students over his years of teaching. Throughout this work, he makes sure to include how students from different background interact with Trinitarian images in different ways. Some backgrounds mentioned are Korean, Chinese, African American, Asian, Anglo-American, and Macedonian. A second strength is the amount of Christian history in the pages of this book. Spencer structures his

chapters on categories of images. With each image, he is looking to Scripture and to Christian history. Without coming across as a historical theology textbook, he discusses and handles debates between historical figures such as Apollinarius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Origen, Clement, Arius, Athanasius, Noetus, and Sabellius. He also discusses modern heterodox movements such as Mormonism, Christian Science, and the Jehovah Witnesses. Spencer's approach to handling Christian history in this work is truly creative.

Three in One has two weaknesses. Spencer appreciates how Robert Boenig in his *C. S. Lewis and the Middle Ages* "carefully explains every technical term he uses so that readers would understand" (1). He commits to applying Boenig's model so that lay readers can follow his discussion too. For example, he defines God (5), exegesis (6), creed (10), perichoresis (15), aseity (16), immanent (17), contingent (37), and eternal (37). Yet, the intended audience of this book "is a group of friends who are interested in this topic who are very dear to me: the more than 3,600 seminarians to whom I have had the privilege to teach theology for more than forty years in a variety of courses throughout the great range of systematic theology" (7). Spencer places "the seminarian" along with "the pastor" in a category of those who are "well-schooled in the faith" (42). If seminarians are well-schooled in the faith, then they should understand these technical theological terms. Theologians do disagree on some technical terms, but they do not disagree on all technical terms that Spencer has defined.

A second weakness is that Spencer's approach devolves into pragmatism. Any image is fair game as long as it can communicate one or more points of the Triune nature of God. Is thinking of God in terms of a fidget spinner (143), a pen with three cartridges (144), or a three-in-one printer (144) really befitting of God? Is this how God wanted us to think of him according to the teaching in Scripture? Spencer's approach could be reasonably corrected by Jamieson and Wittman's rule number three for biblical reasoning: "Biblical discourse about God should be understood in a way appropriate to its object, so read Scripture's depictions of God in a manner that fits the canonical portrait of God's holy name and his creation of all things out of nothing."[1]

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[1]R. B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 63.

Even with these weaknesses considered, Spencer's work is recommended to theologians and seminarians. This book forces the reader to think about the Trinity and to think about how to best communicate the biblical truths of the Trinity to children, to adults, to lost people, and to people of very different cultures.

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Gospel Centered Discipleship. By Jonathan K. Dodson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 189pp. Paperback, $16.99.

Jonathan Dodson is pastor of City Life Church which he started with his wife and a small group of friends in Austin, Texas. He is also the founder of Gospel-Centered Discipleship which provides resources to the church to help make disciples of Jesus.

The gospel is often discussed among Christians as a way into the kingdom of God. The gospel is explained as the good news of how Holy God has made a way for sinful mankind to be restored to a right relationship with Him through the finished work of Jesus Christ. In the book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship,* Dodson explains how the gospel is central to the discipleship process, not just an entrance point. Evangelism and discipleship are not two different steps into Christianity; however, they are presented that way often in the modern church. Often, evangelism will get the sinner in the door, and the church is left to disciple these new converts. It seems the gospel is needed to make one a Christian but not mature one as a Christian. Dodson explains, "Gospel-centered discipleship is not about how we perform but who we are—*imperfect people, clinging to a perfect Christ, being perfected by the Spirit*" (17). Dodson spends the rest of his book unpacking this definition.

The book is arranged into three parts with different chapters as sub-parts. In part 1, Dodson defines discipleship in three chapters: Making Disciples, The Gospel Commission, and The Goal of Discipleship. This is a strength of his book. With so many books and opinions and so much information on discipleship published today, it is hard to know what one means when one says discipleship. The minds of most churchgoers are conditioned to associate evangelism with lost people and discipleship with saved people; the gospel is needed to evangelize the lost but not disciple

the saved. In part 1, Dodson establishes that the same Gospel needed to save the sinner is required to sanctify the sinner. Dodson writes, "The gospel makes and matures disciples; it is the catalyst for salvation and sanctification. This is why we need gospel-centered discipleship" (28–29). He grounds his definition in the Great Commission Jesus gave in Matthew 28:18-20. His defining discipleship is the way to strengthen the foundation of his book and set the book up for great success. He defines the disciple as one who learns from the Gospel (teaching), relates to others around the Gospel (baptize), and is on a mission for the Gospel (going). He writes, "In summary, disciples are rational, relational, and missional. They learn the gospel, relate in the mission, and convey the gospel" (34). The title of the book says it all. This book is about the Gospel being at the center of the whole discipleship process from start to finish.

Part 2 of the book distinguishes two extremes in how Christians approach discipleship. The first extreme is earning favor with God through personal achievement through obedience to specific commands. This would be a legalistic approach to discipleship. The second extreme is using the Gospel as a license to sin. This extreme abuses God's grace with the understanding that because God has forgiven the sinner, he has been set free to live in any way that would bring him happiness. This extreme is more concerned with personal happiness and not personal holiness. Distinguishing between these two extremes greatly clarifies what the author means by Gospel-centered discipleship and what he does not mean.

Part 3 of the book provides a practical section on how to apply the Gospel in making disciples through community, mentoring relationships, peer discipleship, discipleship groups, and a Gospel-centered culture. This section provides a well-needed firm conclusion to his argument. Discipleship must not be all intellectual learning but transformational obedience to the life of Jesus. This section concludes by applying the first two sections to the disciple's life. I greatly encourage this book to be read, studied, and practiced. This book will prove beneficial to the doctoral student in seminary as well as the layperson in the pew by encouraging them to and preparing them for making disciples of all nations.

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The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology. By Leo Donald Davis. *Theology and Life Series*, no. 21. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, reprint of 1988 ed. 342 pp. Paperback, $29.95.

A number of books address the first seven ecumenical councils of the church, but Leo Donald Davis's book *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils* remains a classic in the field. This printing is a reprint of that earlier volume. Davis addresses the councils of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II, Constantinople III, and Nicea II. The subtitle is an apt description; this text addresses both the theology and the history leading up to, culminating in, and flowing from each council.

Since Christology was the major topic at each of these councils, that doctrine is given significant attention. What is a bit surprising about this volume is that it also painstakingly addresses all the issues decided at each council, most of which addressed ecclesiology rather than Christology. Each council addressed somewhat tedious issues of polity, particularly which bishops or metropolitans appointed priests in specific areas, and other logistical issues in the practice of the church. Because these issues of ecclesiology tended to be numerous in each council, Davis gives much more attention to them than in most books on these councils. Although he addresses the Christological issues adequately, I personally would have enjoyed a much more thorough discussion about the basis for these Christological issues. Davis seldom delves into a detailed exegesis of the key biblical passages that were used by each side to buttress their position.

This volume is clearly a work in historical theology. However, it is the historical and political events leading up to and flowing from these councils which garners Davis's greatest attention. The focus is as much or more on the political machinations of each council than the theological foundations around which they revolved. For example, for each council, Davis traces who the emperor was in the period leading up to, during, and after each council, and what was the theological leaning of each of these emperors. Davis describes the political "tug of war" among the various bishops for power and authority. This narrative is a significant contribution, because it helps explain some of the motivations and political forces that led to the council's deliberations. As one illustration, the bishop of Rome struggled to assert preeminence over

all the other metropolitan bishops. The bishop of Rome did not attend the councils personally, which might have made him appear to be a bishop among other bishops, but instead the Roman bishop was represented by "legates" who communicated the bishop's preferences. As political boundaries shifted over the years, the bishops in Cappadocia, Jerusalem, and Alexandria sought to increase their appointive powers in the churches in their region. The larger issue was the persistently different perceptions of the Eastern churches from the Western churches. The later schism between the Eastern and Western churches had its roots in these councils.

As a "history from below," this volume brings out the human pride and emotional reactions that became evident in these councils. These discussions about Christ were not always conducted in a Christlike manner. Sometimes the bishops stooped to utilizing worldly means to accomplish their ends. Both major combatants in the Council of Ephesus in 431 sought to lobby the emperor for his favor. Nestorius dispatched a well-placed government official to lobby the emperor on his behalf. However, his rival, Cyril of Alexandria, had his personal physician bring expensive gifts for the emperor, including cloth, tapestries, ivory furniture, ostriches, and over a million dollar in cash. Not surprisingly, it was Cyril who curried the emperor's favor (158).

Given the difficulty of long travel in that day, the participants arrived at different times, sometimes weeks or months apart. The group with the largest proportion of votes on their side at the beginning of a council gave them a bit of an advantage, but late-arriving bishops could swing the vote the other way. Reminiscent of some Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings, both key leaders at the contentious council at Ephesus sought to "pack the pew" with people favorable to their own view. Cyril of Alexandria brought fifty bishops plus a number of priests and monks (including Schenoudi, a well-known destroyer of pagan shrines). Nestorius brought seventeen bishops, a large number of other clergymen, and a large group of bodyguards! Count Candidian of the emperor's royal guard was dispatched with a small army to attempt to keep the peace (154).

This is a well-written, interesting, classic book on the Christological councils. Even scholars who know the councils well will glean new information from this volume. The key theological terms utilized are defined in a helpful glossary, and an index of

names and subjects helps the reader find material about particular areas of interest. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils* is well-worth having in one's library, which probably helps explain why it is still in print even to this day. Highly recommended.

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Make Disciples of All Nations: A History of Southern Baptist International Missions. Edited by John D. Massey, Mike Morris, W. Madison Grace II. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021. 398 pp. Paperback, $24.99.

Make Disciples of All Nations is edited by John D. Massey, Mike Morris, and W. Madison Grace II. At the time of the book's publication, the three editors served together at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The work includes twelve contributors who teach theology, church history, and missiology across the Southern Baptist Convention.

The authors aim to tell "the story of the SBC missions efforts and progress to make disciples of all nations" (16). They recognize the importance of William Estep's book, *Whole Gospel Whole World*, which records Baptist missions history up to 1995.[2] With this work, the authors seek to continue the story through 2020 and address some of the revolutions in modern missions like globalization and the movement of Christianity to the Global South. They argue that a retelling of Southern Baptist missions history will reshape strategy and foster greater cooperation (16–18). Like Estep's earlier volume, the book is organized by administrations throughout IMB history.[3]

Make Disciples of All Nations begins with an overview of the historical background behind the Southern Baptist Convention's founding in 1845. Baptists met in Augusta, Georgia out of a desire to see Christ proclaimed around the world. However, despite these noble intentions, slavery was at the root of their split with

[2] Estep, William R. *Whole Gospel Whole World: The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1995*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1994.

[3] The Foreign Mission Board (FMB) changed its name to the International Mission Board (IMB) in 1997.

Northern Baptists. Though early IMB leaders did not own slaves, they did not oppose or denounce this sinful institution.

As the IMB began to expand its reach around the world, it encountered a number of setbacks. The organization faced theological challenges like the Gospel Mission Movement and the Fundamentalist-Modernist debate. Financial difficulties left the IMB with less than two dollars in the bank in 1865. In light of its problematic founding, the board was challenged with social issues like race relations. Though each IMB leader encountered problems and made mistakes, they each sought to further gospel work among the nations.

The last few chapters explain developments in the IMB's missiology. Terry and Fries highlight Keith Parks, whose leadership "led to the development of the first defined strategy in the history of the IMB—at least a strategy identified as such" (291). In the years following the Lausanne Congress in 1974, the IMB began to focus on reaching specific people groups rather than geopolitical nations. Moreover, short-term missions became prominent around the world to support long-term ministry. After various missionary methods developed like Church Planting Movements, T4T, and Pioneer Evangelism, IMB leaders clarified their missiological convictions with the *Foundations* document in 2018. Currently led by Paul Chitwood, the IMB continues to set goals for how churches can pray, give, go, and send in obedience to the Great Commission.

In *Make Disciples of All Nations*, the contributors seek to be "celebratory of 175 years of cooperative missions while also being critically reflective" (18). Despite the board's various setbacks, the authors present the IMB as progressing toward greater cooperation and impact around the globe. The latter chapters are especially optimistic about the future of IMB and are positive toward the tenures of recent presidents. While the authors attempt to write objectively about the IMB's history, their relationships with previous leaders could have affected the way they record these events. Though their personal observations are useful to the reader, they reveal a potential partiality toward recent IMB administrations. Another edition will be needed in the future to give a more objective analysis of these leaders.

The division of the book into presidential administrations matches the model of Estep's *Whole Gospel Whole World*. This structure is logical and easy for the reader to follow. However, this

kind of organization, especially with multiple contributors, can allow for overlapping content within the book. This structure has its weaknesses, but on the whole, it is helpful in tracing the major developments of the IMB.

The overall argument of the book is strengthened by the variety of academic disciplines represented by the contributors. For instance, Duesing takes a thematic approach to describe the theological and historical background of the Baptist movement. On the other hand, Akin and Hadaway provide a missiological approach when focusing on field strategies throughout Elliff and Platt's tenures. Although the differences between the authors' writing styles are stark at times, the work "provide[s] a rich mosaic of SBC missions in all its diversity" because of its variety of methodologies (17).

As they discuss missions history, the authors point to cooperation and theology as two of the foundational elements of Southern Baptist faith and practice. The Baptist Faith and Message was written in 1925 in response to a compromising theological climate in the ecumenical movement. Just five years before, the IMB had begun requiring its missionaries to affirm a statement of belief in order to serve on the field (165-166). Though ecumenical churches and leaders attempted to do more together, the authors show that their sacrifice of core convictions prevented them from fulfilling God's mission for the church. The commitment to both biblical convictions and cooperation in mission has been a polarizing issue throughout Southern Baptist history. During the Parks administration, he argued that "it was missions that united the convention, while many conservatives argued for doctrine as the source of the SBC's unity" (313). The SBC was not born out of a unique theology. In fact, Southern Baptists held no theological disagreements with Northern Baptists in the 1840s (62). Excluding the influence of slavery, the SBC was founded upon the desire to cooperate in missions. Yet, the SBC has crafted three editions of the Baptist Faith and Message in order to unify their mission around theological convictions. The dichotomy highlighted between cooperation and conviction is one that will continue to be discussed as Southern Baptists work together in God's mission.

In *Make Disciples of All Nations*, the authors celebrate the efforts of the IMB and update its contributions to the present day. This work allows Southern Baptist scholars of theology, history, and missiology to advocate for their convention's missions agency.

Doubtlessly, the book will need revisions and updates in the coming years just like its predecessor, *Whole Gospel Whole World*. Nonetheless, the authors produce a helpful resource for current and potential IMB missionaries along with Southern Baptist pastors and leaders who desire to fulfill the Great Commission. *Make Disciples of All Nations* is an important work that displays the "one sacred effort" that labors toward the Revelation 7 vision of every nation, tribe, people, and language worshiping the Lamb.

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Baptists and Worship: Sitting Beneath the Gospel's Joyful Sound. By R. Scott Connell. Monographs in Baptist History, vol. 14. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020.

R. Scott Connell's book *Baptists and Worship: Sitting Beneath the Gospel's Joyful Sound* sought to answer the question, "How did Baptists in North America take the gospel initially brought from England and re-present it in worship for successive generations of Baptist worship?" (22). The parameters for Connell's study were the 1600s to 2010. After an introduction, Connell divided the book into two parts, the worship foundations and the worship synthesis. In the first part, Connell explored the Baptist worship movements in North America, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Sandy Creek. In the second part, Connell focused on four particular churches as case studies for his premise that Baptist worship has always been Gospel focused and Christ-centered. Those churches are: Siloam Baptist Church in Marion, Alabama (1822-1855), Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, Canada (1882–1903), Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky (1881–1907), and Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky (2000–2010).

In the beginning, Connell introduced his theology of worship, a proposed model of worship, and the methodology of research for the text. Connell's definition of worship was, "worship is dialogue" (1). Connell explained, "in short, a worship service is a snapshot within the context of an ongoing relationship between worshipers and their object of worship" (1). Following Connell's explanation on his theology of worship, Connell provided a proposed model for worship. This model synthesized Chapell's, Leaf-

blad's, Webber's, Cherry's, and Dix's models as "gospel shapes" and response (21).[4] "Gospel shapes" are revelation, mediation, and exhortation that represent God's side of the dialogue, and response represents humanity's side (21). Regarding the methodology, Connell used four criteria (in order of importance): "1. Prominence of influence upon Baptist worship. 2. Prominence of influence upon Baptist church life in other areas. 3. Representation of a chronological period of Baptist history not already covered. 4. Availability of information to be studied" (23).

In the first section of the book, Connell wrote about the American Baptists' foundation in England, followed by Philadelphia Baptists, Charleston, and Sandy Creek. Connell noted that the earliest beginnings of Baptist worship happened in the northern colonies, but real developments in worship happened in the middle and southern colonies. After the discussion of early American Baptists, Connell explored the first Baptists in Philadelphia (1688–1746). Connell explained that Philadelphia Baptists were a good example of early gospel-focused Baptist worship, due to their context for religious liberty. Next, Connell examined the Baptist churches of Charleston (1750–1800). Connell gave two conclusions: they favored set orders and a Christ-focused theme. Another Baptist group that came about at the same time as the Charleston Baptists were the Sandy Creek Baptists (1755–1800). The Sandy Creek Baptists preferred spontaneous and flexible worship services that were similar to the evangelistic camp meetings.

In the second section of the text, Connell focused on worship synthesis, his observations based on the established worship themes in the first part of the text. Here, Connell explored four case studies of relevant churches throughout North American Baptist worship history. Connell observed that each church contained a gospel-centered and Christ-focused thread through them all. This proved the point that North American Baptists have always had the gospel as a "liturgical hermeneutic," until today.

R. Scott Connell's book, *Baptists and Worship*, is a refreshing polemic of the North American Baptist stream of worship. His research of the subject is thorough.

One of Connell's strengths is his knowledge of the key figures in today's worship conversation. His usage of Chapell, Dix, Web-

[4] Webber, Cherry, and Dix are from the same school of thought: the fourfold model.

ber, Cherry, Leafblad, and others show that Connell's conclusions arose not from mere opinion or isolated thought; Connell is tapped into the worship research of the day. Connell used Ellis to help support the expansion of Connell's definition of worship (9), and used Chapell, Leafblad, Cherry, Webber, and Dix to create his own liturgical model:

God Man
Revelation ←→ Response
Mediation ←→ Response
Exhortation ←→ Response (21-22)

Connell drew from a deep well of worship study.

A weakness of Connell's book is his definition of worship, "worship is dialogue" (1). Though his definition is thoroughly expounded upon through the course of the book, the definition is not necessarily helpful. Later on in chapter 1, Connell provided a superior definition, "worship is a dialogical encounter in which God and humanity are active participants through Christ and in which transformation occurs" (9). The utilization of the initial definition lacks adequate explanatory depth. Connell should have just used his modified definition of Ellis's definition of worship. "Worship is dialogue" can be construed as overly simplistic.

In chapter 1, Connell wrote, "In sum, this book seeks to tell the story of how Baptists took the gospel they brought from England and re-presented it over successive generations of worshipers that has resulted in Baptist worship today" (5). However, his choice of churches for worship synthesis was not sufficient to demonstrate that conclusion. Connell failed to include prominent Baptists streams such as National Baptist Churches, Sovereign Grace, Passion City Church, or Elevation Church.[5] In chapter 1,

[5] I argue that based on Connell's criteria of churches, Passion City Church must be included due to Giglio's theological tradition: he received his theological education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has wide influence in American Christian worship. He might not identify as a Southern Baptist but his tradition is Baptist. Likewise, Elevation Church did not release their first album till 2010, but their ministry started in 2006 and they were squarely a SBC church at the time delineated. An argument can be made that Elevation has changed the landscape of worship. See "Louie Giglio," Focus on the Family, accessed September 28, 2023, https://www.focusonthefamily.com/contributors/louie-giglio/; "Elevation Church Withdraws from SBC Cooperation | Baptist Press," https://www.baptistpress.com/, June 29, 2023,

Connell's delimitations were inadequate. He did not restrict his research to Southern Baptist churches and yet did not include other prominent streams that come from the Baptist tradition. Instead, Connell chose to use particular churches that supported his thesis. An example of this is Jarvis Street Baptist Church. According to Connell, he chose this church in order to document an "outside of SBC" or Canadian Baptist worship stream (23). This choice does not necessarily support his methodology and thesis.

In the chapter on the first Baptists in Philadelphia, Connell wrote, "the disagreement ensued over whether singing in the heart should also afford the public expression with the voice, or should it be merely internal" (53). This discussion illustrates how twenty-first century churches within Baptist worship take for granted singing as public expression. This shows contemporary students of worship to take a broader view on the minutia they hold on to tightly. In the end, like Connell's explained, gospel-centered and Christ-focused worship is central.

His attempt to show the gospel-focused and Christ-centered stream can be applauded. However, further case studies in his synthesis section would only help his thesis. The sample size is both eclectic and homogenous. Connell's sample size is eclectic due to his seemingly subjective choices.[6] At the same time, Connell's choices can be viewed as homogenous because they seem to only follow a particular stream of Baptist thought related to his relational and locational context in the South. Connell's text would have benefited from a more diverse sampling of churches throughout North American history. An example would be the National Baptists and other influential non-denominational church with Baptist roots.

Another strength of Connell's text is his observations about Baptist worship from 1600s to 2010. Connell observed five characteristics that rose to the top of Baptist worship (205–7). The first characteristic is the centrality of the preaching of the Word. The second characteristic is the importance of public expression of fourth. The third characteristic is the accounting of nonbelievers in the worship service. The next characteristic is the focus on financial giving. The fifth characteristic is the gospel-centered lit-

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https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/elevation-church-withdraws-from-sbc-cooperation/.

[6] Jarvis Street Baptist Church and Sojourn Community Church.

urgy. These five observational characteristics provide both a good measuring tool and a great outline for any pastoral or ministerial musician looking to access and develop his or her own liturgy.

Overall, Connell's book is a refreshing take on the study of the streams of Baptist worship in North America. Connell's wealth of knowledge and research in this text is judiciously applied. His proposed model for worship is both biblical and inclusive enough to be utilized in almost any Baptist church context. Worship students would greatly benefit from this contribution to the study of worship.

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A Trustworthy Gospel: Arguments for an Early Date for Matthew's Gospel. By Daniel B. Moore. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2024. xiv + 177 pages. Paperback, $27.

In this important volume, Daniel Moore argues that Matthew's Gospel was written no later than AD 42 and is the earliest of the four Gospels to be composed. In chapter 1, Moore proposes to offer "a completely different paradigm for how the early church took the gospel message to their world than what is commonly taught by the academic community" (1). Chapter 2 contends that the apostolic community had the "means, motive, and opportunity" to generate written biographies of Jesus very soon after his resurrection (7).

Chapter 3 attempts to leverage the witness of the early church fathers in support of the book's thesis. Recognizing the challenge seemingly posed by Irenaeus, Moore argues for a retranslation of the following portion of *Against Heresies* 3.1.1, standardly translated as follows: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect (*tē idia autōn dialectō*), while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome (*en Rhōmē*)…After their departure, Mark…did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter."[7] Here Moore defends three major contentions. First, *tē idia*…*dialectō* is a dative of reference or respect meant to indicate that Matthew gave the Jews "that which was *in reference to*

[7] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols., rep. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:414.

their own language, but was not their own language" (31; emphasis original). Hence Moore retranslates *tē idia autōn dialectō* as "*in a* language *contrasting with* their own" (32, 34; emphasis original), according to which Irenaeus acknowledged that Matthew wrote in Greek. Second, by *en Rhōmē* Irenaeus, as well as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius in related texts, denote the Roman Empire outside Judea ("in Rome, *the empire*"), as did Horace, Josephus, Plutarch, and Herodian in various passages (27–28, 34; emphasis original). Third, Irenaeus' earlier statement in the same paragraph that following Jesus' resurrection the apostles "departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings" demonstrates that "after their departure" means after Peter and Paul left Judea ("after their departure *to other lands*") as opposed to after their deaths (32–34, emphasis original). Moore maintains that with the potential exception of Eusebius (when discussing Papias), every church father who comments on the order of the Gospels claims that Matthew was written first (22). Further, Moore reinterprets Origen's statement that Matthew's Gospel was "published in the Hebrew language (*grammasin Hebraikois suntetagmenon*)"[8] as published "*to* or *for* the benefit of the Hebrews" (36; emphasis original).

In chapter 4, Moore contends that in Galatians 3:1 Paul literally meant by *proegraphē* "previously written" (per Romans 15:4), such that the end of the verse should be rendered, "What was previously written concerning Jesus Christ's crucifixion was presented before your eyes" (55–62). Presupposing the South Galatian theory, Moore supplies thematic and pedagogical arguments identifying the previous writing Paul placed before the Galatians as the Gospel of Matthew (40–50). Chapter 5 surveys the writings of several post-Reformation scholars (c. 1640–1900) for arguments that Matthew dates between AD 41–42 (62–77). Against Richard Bauckham's proposal that the church relied on the memories of eyewitnesses for the traditions about Jesus until Mark was written in the mid-60s, chapters 6 and 7 appeal to ancient authors (including Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Philo, Pliny the Elder, Quintilian, and Plutarch) who stress the fallibility of memory and greatly privilege written material over oral material (83–126). Chapter 8 furnishes an overview of how the presupposition that Matthew predates and was used by the Pauline Epistles and other early Christian writings

[8] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, 14 vols., rep. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:273.

would affect our exegesis of the New Testament. Chapter 9 delineates a possible "scenario in which Matthew was intent on recording and publishing the account of the Messiah from his earliest days as a disciple" (138).

Surprising is this book's preference for external evidence to internal evidence in establishing Matthean priority (13–15). As this reviewer practices historiography, external evidence should never be given more weight than, but may be given equal weight to, internal evidence only when both species of evidence are coterminous. The later the external evidence is than the internal evidence, a progressively declining rate of confidence ought to be afforded the external evidence in relation to the internal evidence. Moore wishes to advance two contentions that *prima facie* stand in tension to one another: first, documents removed in time by more than a few decades from the events they narrate are potentially historically suspect; second, the testimony of Irenaeus *et alia* regarding the Synoptic Gospels, removed in Moore's view by more than a century from the writing of the Synoptic Gospels, is trustworthy and so establishes Matthean priority. It appears to this reviewer that Moore cannot have it both ways. Thus, even if Moore's retranslation of Irenaeus *et alia* stands, one wonders whether Moore has achieved a Pyrrhic victory. If Moore's first contention is correct, then Moore owes his readers a significant engagement with the internal evidence from the Synoptic Gospels to establish Matthean priority; he cannot use late external evidence primarily (or alone) to make his case.

Moore's retranslation efforts seem to this reviewer a mixed bag. Positively, Moore makes a strong case that *en Rhōmē* can legitimately be understood as in the Roman Empire, beyond Judea. Moore also convincingly argues that Irenaeus' phrase "after their departure" refers to a time after Peter and Paul left Judea, not to a time after their martyrdoms. Perhaps most significantly, Moore's arguments that *proegraphē* (Galatians 3:1) indicates a previously published Gospel seem compelling. Further research is needed to see whether this Gospel is better identified as Mark than Matthew, as this reviewer suspects. Negatively, Moore's case that Irenaeus and Origen believed that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek appears to fall short of the mark. Regarding *tē idia autōn dialectō*, there is to my knowledge no other instance where a dative of respect means "contrasting with" as opposed to "corresponding to," which is how Daniel Wallace understands his proffered renderings

"with reference to, concerning, about, in regard to."[9] Accordingly, Irenaeus is best understood as asserting that Matthew wrote his Gospel in the dialect corresponding to (i.e., matching) that of the Hebrews, namely, either Hebrew or Aramaic. Regarding Origen's phrase *grammasin Hebraikois*, Moore's contention that the Gospel "was prescribed *to* or *for* the benefit of the Hebrews" (36; emphasis original) seems to ignore *grammasin*, most naturally understood as "in the letters (characters) of" the Hebrews, which presupposes the document's composition in the Hebrew or Aramaic language.

In any case, this book quite laudably advances the thesis that the early church could and would have composed Matthew (and Mark) prior to the 60s. While not everyone will find the thesis convincing, this book deserves wide readership among and consideration by New Testament scholars.

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Introducing Christianity to Mormons: A Practical and Comparative Guide to What the Bible Teaches. By Eric Johnson. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2022. 282 pp. $18.99, Paperback.

There are few evangelistic challenges as difficult as witnessing to someone steeped in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). It is a religion that prizes family, piety, and faithfulness. An LDS member is usually linked to the church not only via personal affiliation, but also through ancestral lineage. Furthermore, as any missionary to the Mormons will opine, the LDS church commonly uses the same terms and phrases as biblical Christianity, but they do not adhere to the same meanings.

How can biblical Christians reach Latter-day Saints with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Mormons have an ever-evolving practice and theology. In a sense, understanding current Mormon doctrine is like hitting a moving target. How can biblical Christians wade into what is sometimes viewed as quixotic theology, and slowly peel back the falsehoods by shining the light of truth? Eric Johnson's book *Introducing Christianity to Mormons: A Practical and Comparative Guide to What the Bible Teaches* is an exciting

[9] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 145.

and workable resource for any traditional, biblical Christian undertaking such a task.

Threaded throughout each chapter are comparisons of Mormon doctrines with biblical Christian doctrines. Johnson uses the writings and claims of both biblical Christian theologians and Mormon theologians alike. For example, stalwarts such as Norman Geisler, Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, and J. I. Packer are used to articulate the Christian position. Johnson even includes pastoral guidance from men such as John Piper, John MacArthur, and Timothy Keller. As for his incorporation of Mormon theologians and leaders, Johnson highlights and quotes the positions of men like Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, Joseph Fielding Smith, James Talmage, and Gordon B. Hinckley.

The purpose of the book is to "communicate Christianity in a way that most Latter-day Saints can understand" (12). The intent behind the book "is not to provide information for the Christian to 'win debates (at all costs)' while purposely putting people down or minimizing their opinions'" (21). A missionary to Mormons at Mormonism Research Ministry, Johnson's care and love for those of the LDS church is evident on every page. He earnestly seeks to see Mormons come to understand the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are several notable features of the book. First, Johnson focuses on the uniqueness and authority of Scripture. He defends not only the authenticity of Scripture, but also the transmission of it. Mormons hold to what is known as the "Great Apostasy." As Bruce McConkie writes, "[the] universal apostasy began in the days of the ancient apostles themselves," but it metastasized not long after the last apostle died.[10] Thus, Mormons reject all versions of Sacred Scripture except the King James Version (and that only when translated correctly). Johnson argues that we can trust the translations we have today given the massive amounts of ancient manuscripts we have from which to work (55).

Second, Latter-day Saints have been impacted by the same deconstructionism that has touched the biblically orthodox world. According to a recent survey, the Church of Latter-day Saints is growing, but slowly.[11] The high birth rate of Mormons accounts

[10] McConkie, Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City, UT, 1966), 43-44.

[11] Jana Riess, "Mormonism is still growing, but slowly," religionnews.org, April 12, 2024, https://religionnews.com/2024/04/12/mormonism-is-still-growing-but-slowly.

for much of the growth. Conversely, many Mormons are leaving the church due to the onslaught of available information online. Unfortunately, many of those that leave Mormonism walk away from any religious practice.

Johnson writes as an evangelist seeking to win the hearts of Mormons who have relinquished LDS belief and are hesitant to trust any religious system. For example, chapter 3, "The Existence of God," may seem a bit out of place given that the book is geared toward helping Mormons and not atheists; however, Johnson explains that "some who leave Mormonism struggle to maintain their belief in God" (77). Thus, he gives a classical apologetic to assist the ex-Mormon. Johnson stresses that leaving one theistic religion does not entail one should jettison all theistic beliefs. Johnson's book is straightforward and pragmatic: it meets Mormons where they are and points them to where they need to be.

Third, Johnson clearly parses the distinction between the Christian view and the Mormon view of God. Mormons hold to a plurality of gods. To the Mormon mind, a triune God is incomprehensible, if not incoherent. The LDS church teaches that God the Father (Elohim), Jesus (also called Jehovah in Mormonism), and the Holy Ghost are all gods separate in person *and* being. Johnson quotes LDS Apostle Jeffery R. Holland: "I think it is accurate to say we believe They [Elohim, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost] are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance" (158).

Understanding the chasm between traditional Christianity and Latter-day Saints, Johnson plainly and thoroughly lays out the Trinitarian view. His simple description is laudable. He avoids the nuanced weeds of the Trinitarian debate but highlights that which is essential. Additionally, Johnson does not mince words when he writes, "Undoubtedly, any rejection of the Trinity is a rejection of God Himself" (157).

Fourth, the ultimate goal of every Mormon is to become god. In his famous King Follet Discourse, Joseph Smith declared, "You have got to learn how to make yourselves God…You have got to learn how to be a god yourself in order to save yourself" (King Follett Discourse). This unique doctrine, couched in the ancient Arian and Pelagian heresies pit Mormon soteriology as an anti-thesis to traditional Christian notions of justification and sanctification. Johnson shows the reader that the Christian view of

original sin (which Mormons reject) necessitates a salvation that is unmerited and undeserved: separate one of the essential Christian doctrines from the corpus of Christian belief and the whole system devolves into a gnarly, chaotic mess.

Written at a popular level to help the lay person and pastor engage Mormons with the truth of the gospel, *Introducing Christianity to Mormons* is essentially a summary of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. The book is not simply a manual on engaging Mormons, it is an apologetic guide to help those struggling to find their way after being jaded by the LDS church. Johnson's arguments and claims are not as precise as the erudite scholar may demand, but his clear writing style and simple prose make the reading informative and helpful. Several comparative graphs and a glossary make this book a perpetual resource for all interacting with Latter-day Saints.

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Listening to Scripture: An Introduction to Interpreting the Bible. By Craig G. Bartholomew. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023. 224 pp. Paperback, $24.99.

Craig Bartholomew has directed the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge since 2017. He hails from South Africa and completed his PhD at the University of Bristol before becoming a professor of philosophy and theology at Redeemer University College in Ontario. His main areas of focus have been philosophy, specifically ethics, and Old Testament, with a focus on Ecclesiastes.

Although I was initially unimpressed by Bartholomew's contribution to the saturated field of hermeneutics textbooks, I have found myself recommending it multiple times over the course of time between when this review was due and when it was written. His primary claim that academic reading of Scripture takes place in service to and because of devotional reading of Scripture resonates with evangelicals, and his skillful defense of how and why allows students to feel confident and scholars to obtain a fresh resource for recommendation.

The "how" rests on theological interpretation and its approach that sets Scriptural authority as primary, relegating historical-

critical methodology and other post-Enlightenment scientifically based ways of filtering and interpreting the text to a secondary status. Though Bartholomew recognizes potential value in "Historical Biblical Criticism" and in respecting a text's genre, he explains that faith, not science, undergirds the truth and authority of Scripture. By adding a dominant "kerygmatic" dimension alongside literary and historical analyses of the text and utilizing Speech Act Theory to defend kerygmatic preeminence, he rearranges the previous progression of interpretation to begin with theological considerations instead of turning to gleaning theological principles *after* establishing an interpretation of the text.

The "why" stems from the Bible as God's instruction, all-important in walking in God's ways and experiencing His pleasure (1-7). Bartholomew's clear and unashamed devotion to Scripture's significance provides a refreshing contrast to textbooks that focus more on historical reconstructions and genre predilections than the life-giving nature of the Bible.

After chapters giving very brief outlines of the Bible's metanarrative and canon development, Bartholomew deals with literary, historical, and kerygmatic concerns in subsequent chapters. Then he proposes three types of hermeneutic all stemming from the kerygmatic thread: 1) *liturgical*: reading to encounter God's presence, 2) *ethical*: reading for life guidance, and 3) *missional*: reading to uncover and join God's mission for creation. Each chapter culminates with a devotional exercise (*lectio divina*) where the reader should put into practice that aspect of Scriptural interpretation, not just in remembering or understanding the principles, but in applying truths and creating new impacts based on them.

Bartholomew's fresh take on hermeneutics through the lens of theological interpretation falls into the current trend in evangelicalism to give priority to theological interpretation over staid "scientific" methodologies. With that being said, the practical steps for interpretation that he gives follow closely along the well-worn twin tracks of respecting historical and literary contexts. He has corrected the "horse before the cart" issue that plagues evangelical institutions that preach authority of Scripture but teach authority of methodology, but now that the "horse" of Biblical authority resumes its correct place pulling the wagon of interpretive methodologies, the actual path remains the same (126).

Bartholomew's contribution of a dominant kerygmatic strand results in his work being excellent for introductory reading in

hermeneutics, especially for students in confessional institutions. However, he does not achieve the scope or depth necessary for a hermeneutics textbook, where students must be more fully equipped with tools for driving their wagon, not merely given the name and destination of the horse and sent off on their way. This introduction lacks the thorough grounding of contextual importance and detailed practical instructions for interpretation that other standards in the field maintain.

In addition to the lack of precise tools for hermeneutics, the destination of interpretation is now clearly marked out instead of being subject to decisions along the way. Bartholomew claims that though historical issues should be explored, an interpreter "need feel no obligation, intellectual or otherwise, to modify her belief in the light of its claims and alleged results" (102). Though granting the authority of Scripture is a necessary circular argument, since any recognition of ultimate authority rests on faith, granting the authority of an *interpretive method* does not necessitate a circular argument, and conflating the authority of Scripture with the authority of its interpretation risks pushing evangelicalism into the same indefensible boat as many cults. By placing theological interpretation as the guide which allows no correction, an interpreter is bound by whatever theological tradition from which he begins. Still, this criticism targets theological interpretation itself more than Bartholomew's application of it here, and Bartholomew notes elsewhere that "devotional reading and academic analysis…can and should be correctives to each other" (9). Generally, one's view on theological interpretation itself (a complex and multivalent term!) will determine whether this monograph seems utterly brilliant or moderately misguided.

A few minor errors do not seriously detract. Bartholomew notes twelve letters of Paul at one point (34) but has the correct thirteen elsewhere (49). He places the closure of the Old Testament canon "well before the time of Jesus," a conclusion that few scholars would accept and that ignores the early Christian use of the Greek Old Testament and its expanded canon and book forms (52). He includes no mention of or engagement with textual criticism of either Testament, an important consideration for students of Scripture.

Overall, Bartholomew provides a resource for confessional institutions and pastors that grounds hermeneutics in listening to God, rather than driving a wedge between study of the Bible and

obedience to it. He securely connects accurate interpretations and life transformations, giving encouragement for evangelicals who recognize the transformative power of the Word and seek guidance in uncovering its communication. The eventual success of this book will rise and fall based on acceptance of theological interpretation as the correct approach to ascertaining the meaning of the Bible.

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Confucianism and Catholicism: Reinvigorating the Dialogue. Edited by Michael R. Slate, Erin M. Cline, and Philip J. Ivanhoe. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. Hardcover. $65.00.

Roman Catholicism and Confucianism have a long and complex history. This history highlights the similarities between these two traditions but also the challenges and opportunities incumbent in attempting to translate from one tradition to another in an evangelistic and missional context. The book is organized as a series of articles in two primary sections: Historical Contexts and Comparative Theology and Philosophy. Overall, the articles are well-written, and each addresses a conceptually interesting topic for those already invested in the discussion between Roman Catholicism and Confucianism. For those who are not invested in this discussion, the relevance of the topics may be unclear, and it may be difficult to identify common themes between the articles. However, while it is not intended as an introduction, some of the articles highlight important introductory issues from a missiological perspective.

The first section is made up of four articles, each targeted at a particularly important issue, moment, or figure in the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese dialogues between Confucianism and Catholicism respectively. Vincent Shen highlights the challenges of translating from Western to Eastern conceptual contexts in the work of early Jesuit missionaries in China. Anh Q. Tran explores the importance and difficulty of inculturation – also called contextualization by many American Protestants – in the Vietnamese Church through a discussion of the development of the "Three Fatherhoods" doctrine. Donald L. Baker highlights the

challenge of religious "dual citizenship" that many Koreans have faced in his discussion of Tasan Chong Yagyong's attempt – and ultimate failure – to simultaneously follow Confucianism and Roman Catholic Christianity. Kevin M. Doak uses a debate between Tanaka Kotaro and Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko published in *Catholic Studies* in 1943 as a jumping off point for an analysis of the state of the Confucian-Catholic dialogue in 20th century Japan.

The second section contains the remaining six articles, each focused on a specific comparative issue. Xueying Wang compares the views of Mengzi, Xunzi, Augustine, and John Chrysostom on the moral education of children with interesting results. Richard Kim compares the moral theories of Mengzi and Thomas Aquinas. He argues that Mengzi held a form of Natural Law Theory and seeks to highlight the intellectually significant core framework of their common approach for contemporary thinkers. Erin M. Cline raises a central practical question for her article: "What might reimagined contemporary Confucian contemplative practices that cultivate traditional Confucian virtues look like?" In order to answer this question, she draws heavily on the contemplative practices developed by Ignatius of Loyola. Victoria S. Harrison explores the role of exemplary reasoning in Catholic and Confucian traditions focusing on the work of Hans Urs Balthasar and Amy Olberding. She argues that Exemplar Reasoning is a useful tool in both traditions for making the tradition understandable to outsiders without sacrificing or warping its core tenets. Lee H. Yearley explores the failure to flourish in both traditions. In each, he adopts a pair of interlocutors – one poetic and one philosophical. In the Catholic tradition, Yearley explores Dante's implicit critiques of Aquinas's view of human nature. In the Confucian tradition, Yearly explores Du Fu's implicit critiques of Mengzi's view of human nature. Philip J. Ivanhoe concludes the book with a brief reflection on the Confucian and Catholic approaches to virtue.

The articles in this book are consistently well-argued and take up interesting topics. They will all be of interest to scholars or students interested in the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Confucians. However, several of them will be of use to readers with relatively little interest in this discussion. The historical section of the book, especially the articles by Shen and Tran, highlight important practical challenges to the work of contextualizing or enculturating the gospel and explore the reasons why specific

attempts to do so succeeded or failed. Similarly, Harrison outlines a specific methodology for inter-religious dialogue that promises a more effective way to enculturate the gospel without losing or warping central aspects of the gospel message. These articles will be of interest to those working in missiology or comparative religious contexts. Kim, Yearley, and Baker's articles all touch on the moral comparative issues (natural law, virtue, and moral formation respectively) in these traditions and will be of interest to Ethicists. Kim's article in particular attempts to outline a formal core to Natural Law theory that is not inherently Christian or Theistic, and this provides a useful model or interlocutor for those working in this field. Finally, Cline's article offers an intriguing perspective on the role of contemplative practices in spiritual formation and may be a useful interlocutor for those interested in this field.

Overall, while the articles are well-written and the book is well-edited, the Confucian-Catholic dialogue is a niche topic, and most readers of this review will be more likely to pick and choose articles of particular interest rather than read the entire book. That being said, the book touches on an array of fields important to Christian theology and ministry and as such articles within it will be useful for many readers.

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Life in the Son: Exploring Participation and Union with Christ in John's Gospel and Letters, By Clive Bowsher. *NSBT* 61. Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023. 200 pages. Paperback, $28.00.

Clive Bowsher serves as the Provost and Director of Mission at Union School of Theology. He is the author of *ONE: Being United to Jesus Changes Everything*, which addresses the theme of union with Christ in John on a pastoral level.

John described Christians' union with Christ as a mutual indwelling, a concept that Bowsher termed "in-one-anotherness." Bowsher developed a Johannine theology of "in-one-anotherness" from the Fourth Gospel and 1-3 John to show that John understood this union with Christ as a "relational intimacy with Christ." This relational understanding of union entails "mutual love, presence, knowledge, and friendship" between God and Christians

(85). Moreover, a believer's "in-one-anotherness" with Christ is transformative, for the believer participates in the character and ways of God through this relationship (86). Thus, Bowsher described the Johannine theology of "in-one-anotherness" as participation in the life of God.

The Fourth Gospel explicitly discusses a believer's "in-one-anotherness" with God in four passages: (i) 6:32-40, 47-59; (ii) 14:1-11, 15-24; (iii) 15:1-17; and (iv) 17:1-26. Bowsher argued these passages together show that "in-one-anotherness" is an intimate relationship between God and his people, including "believers' knowledge of God…; their trust in Jesus' death; their obedience and transformation; and their sharing as one in Jesus' mission and loving character" (49). Bowsher highlighted the connection between this "in-one-another" relationship and life in the Fourth Gospel, showing that, for John, this union with God is the essence and content of *zōē aiōnios* (35, 41, 47, cf. 28, 63).

Bowsher's discussion of the epistles focused almost exclusively on 1 John. Bowsher connected "in-one-anotherness" to the epistle's teaching on *koinonia* with God and knowledge of God. For John, this relationship with God is inseparable from walking in the light, fellowship with other believers, forgiveness of sins through Christ, and proper Christological confession (58, 60, 63, cf. 72-73). Moreover, the epistle ascribes the believer's ability to live the Christian life to being born of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (69-71). In sum, the Johannine epistles highlight the transformative nature of Christians' "in-one-another" relationship with God, for this union with God is a participation in God's "character and ways" (77).

Based on this Johannine theology of "in-one-anotherness," Bowsher explored how Christians' relationship with God mirrors the Son's relationship with the Father. This relationship highlights the believer's participation in the journey of Christ, a journey that Bowsher described as "commencement-walk-destination" (94). The Son came to earth from above, and God begets the believer by the Spirit so that the Christian is likewise "not of this world" (99). The Son lived a life of faithfulness that ended in suffering, and the follower of Christ "hates his life in this world" and participates in the works of Christ through suffering (101-02). Just as the Father sent the Son to do the works of God, so the Son sends his disciples into the world to continue his mission. God raised the Son from the dead, and Christ ascended to heaven to be with

the Father. Similarly, Jesus promised to raise his followers from the dead and take them to the Father (102-06). Thus, the Fourth Gospel shows that "the child of God's journey…is a participation with Jesus: it is a shared experience of Jesus's journey or trajectory, and a joint undertaking with the Son" (117).

Lastly, Bowsher placed this Johannine theology of "in-one-anotherness" within the larger biblical theology of participation and union with Christ. Following a progressive covenantalism model of biblical theology (135-36), Bowsher argued that the unfolding of the OT covenants reveals that God's plan of salvation ends with his people being in "a filial relationship to him, with the intention that they act as his servant-priest-kings" (137). As servant-priest-kings, God's people would be faithful to his commands and represent God in his kingdom (137). Bowsher argued that the Johannine teaching of "in-one-anotherness" with God fulfills the covenantal promises of the OT (140). Believers experienced a consummated "partial fulfillment" of the OT hope of "in-one-anotherness" with God in this life, and believers will experience the fullness of God's relational presence in the new creation (145-46).

Bowsher established the centrality of Christians' union with and participation in God through Christ in John's theology. He defined participation in Christ as a "sharing by believers, either in Christ's death and resurrection, or in Christ's identity and position (e.g. his sonship and rule), or in Christ's own attributes (e.g. his love, life and glory)" (2). This relationship implies the transformation of the participator into the likeness of the one in whom he is participating. Bowsher wrote, "An individual's in-one-anotherness and *koinonia* with God are always transformational, involving shared commitment to and relational participation in God's ways and character" (77). Participation is also a relationship of dependence. To use the Johannine imagery of a vine and its branches, the branches participate in the vine by drawing their life and effectiveness for fruit from the vine (39).

However, Bowsher's usage of "participation" is imprecise at times. Bowsher used "participation" in its technical, theological sense to mean a transformative relationship of dependence and identification. At other times, he used the term in a more general sense to mean simply "active engagement in" or "contribution to." These two usages of "participation" are not interchangeable. Bowsher continually defined "relationship" as "mutual participation in

another's life" (30, 54, 59, 62, 77, 86, etc.). But does God participate in Christians in the way Christians participate in God? Love, knowledge, presence, and friendship are reciprocal aspects of God's relationship with his people (85). However, participation cannot be reciprocal because it implies dependance and transformation. God cannot change and is dependent upon nothing outside himself. Bowsher does not argue that God is dependent upon humanity or changes in any way because of his relationship with believers, but more precision in his use of 'participation' would have eliminated any possible misunderstandings. At the same time, Bowsher's flexible use of "participation" does not discount the validity of his arguments. His work challenges readers to see the full depth of God's relationship with his people in Johannine theology.

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Interpreting Your World: Five Lenses for Engaging Theology and Culture. By Justin Ariel Bailey. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022. 192 pages. Paperback, $22.00.

Justin Ariel Bailey explores the relationship between theology and culture in his book *Interpreting Your World: Five Lenses for Engaging Theology and Culture*. In the introduction, Bailey acknowledges a common understanding of culture as something at odds with Christianity, but he recognizes culture is not so simple. "Culture is all-encompassing," he writes, "and it reaches us before theology does" (5), meaning believers follow Christ from within culture, having already been steeped in culture before they follow Jesus. While we cannot be uncritical of culture, neither can we so sharply separate it from how we live and move and have our being as people in this world. As we walk with Christ, we walk in culture. Bailey explores the conversation between culture and theology by way of prepositions, considering how theology *of* culture, theology *from* culture, and theology *for* culture may be faithfully pursued. His goal is to "[offer] a non-anxious approach to cultural engagement, one that is attentive to the hunger for meaning, beauty, and justice and is governed by gospel virtues of faith, love, and hope" (17). Bailey proceeds to use metaphor to examine five dimensions

of cultural engagement: meaning, power, ethical, religious, and aesthetic.

First, he explores the meaning dimension through the metaphor of virus and immune system. In one sense, culture is like a virus. Aspects of it are caught and spread. But in another sense, culture is like an immune system, in that "culture provides us with a dynamic system of discernment, one that allows us to move through an ocean of information and yet maintain a unified identity" (22). Bailey argues that meaning is the key to understanding why some parts of culture take root in us and others do not, for we cling to what gives meaning to our lives and resist what does not. But Bailey also underlines the reality that there are many "immune systems" in the world, a fact that drives him to look for a more stable immune system than one only formed of culture (27). He goes on to show how the gospel meets us in our cultures and both engages us in them while also critiquing them. He calls for the practice of hospitality, where theology can host conversations with culture in the pursuit of forming "cultural immune systems [that] are more consonant with a biblical vision of human flourishing" (38-39).

Second, he explores the power dimension through the metaphor of a power play. Recognizing that "within every culture there is a struggle over whose perspective is normative and whose meaning matters the most" (42), Bailey engages in a conversation with critical theory due to its emphasis on power dynamics in culture, showing how questions of power factor heavily into cultural conversations. He argues that Christians need to pay attention to power's place in culture, but that power is not all there is. He urges the practice of iconoclasm, which "seeks to name and negate the pretensions of power whereby we make idols and break image bearers" (60).

Third, he explores the ethical dimension through the metaphor of a moral boundary. Bailey argues that "all cultures are concerned with righteousness" (70), that is, with moral judgments about what ought to be or ought not to be and with the boundaries dividing the two. Cultures operate with differing concepts of good, though, and some people care more about appearing righteous than about actually being righteous. In response, Bailey appeals to a higher standard of judgment: that of answerability to God as opposed to autonomy, an answerability worked out in stewardship and servanthood (75-82). As people see themselves as accountable first to

God and then to others, they engage in culture with humility and grace.

Fourth, he explores the religious dimension through the metaphor of a sacred experience. Bailey observes, "We create culture in recognition and defiance of the reality of death" (87), finding in that work the human search for meaning and community. Religious practice offers unique significance to such a search, and Bailey argues that all people participate in such practices, "For although not all humans are adherents of a particular *religion*, we all live *religiously*" (89). While religion offers meaning and community, it can be destructive if religious significance is attached to the wrong source. Bailey argues that true religion must come not from humanity but from God, showing how divine revelation corrects and challenges culture and offers transformation. Bailey, following J. H. Bavinck, argues for the practice of "directional discernment," understood as "a process of asking careful questions to distinguish the directions in which a person or culture is moving, toward and away from God" (103).

Fifth and finally, he explores the aesthetic dimension through the metaphor of a poetic project. The aesthetic dimension, Bailey writes, is difficult to define because "[t]he meaning is felt before it is named, and the 'felt qualities' are essential to what is meaningful" (107). But the feelings of transcendence art can bring are universally felt, leading to further creative works as people "play with the possibilities of life in this world" (116). Bailey writes that we can delight in what is beautiful as we see the beauty of God's design for life and eternity, with the Spirit refining our desires to that end. The aesthetic dimension offers escape not from reality but to a deeper reality, where hope and life and beauty flourish for all eternity in Christ. Bailey ends with a call to "generous making," whereby people "can make something that offers a glimpse of how things really are" (125, 126).

In his conclusion, Bailey uses the example of Communion practices to illustrate the ways that belief and action operate together, reflecting and shaping what people believe. "Your interpretation is your life," Bailey writes, for, "whether we are interpreting Scripture or culture, it matters what we *do*, not just what we think, believe, or feel" (132). Such interpretation is a complex act, though, leading Bailey to encourage the practices of "non-reductive curiosity," "non-dismissive discernment," and "non-anxious presence" (141-147). These practices allow Christians to

form their judgments in order to see where God is at work in the world. Bailey ends with an appendix wherein he offers questions by which to investigate and evaluate cultural artifacts (149-152).

Bailey's book is incredibly helpful, leading readers to ask good questions in the pursuit of faithful engagement with culture. Bailey is curious without compromising convictions, and he is critical without being dismissive. This makes his book a refreshing read, for it navigates the complexity of cultural engagement with grace and truth, humility and integrity. His book is also accessible, providing a wealth of content in just under 200 pages. For its thoughtfulness and practicality, *Interpreting Your World* is to be highly commended. It will be a great addition to any library and will further robust conversations on the relationship between theology and culture.

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Pastoral Identity: True Shepherds in the Household of Faith. By Douglas D. Webster. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2023. 186 pages. Paperback, $19.99.

Douglas Webster's recent work *Pastoral Identity* is an attempt to reframe the pastoral calling and identity. The author addresses a problem, namely, that the legacy of pastoral ministry many pastors have inherited from church history that has created a chasm between pastors and their people (9). His goal is to understand the relationship between pastors and congregants in the setting of the institutional church formed by culture and the "countercultural household of faith" of the early church (9). Through ten chapters, Webster examines the pastoral office through different metaphors and images that aim to help the reader rebuild a sound pastoral identity.

In chapter 1, Webster sets the "Christendom church" of nominal Christian culture against the "household of faith" church one sees in the New Testament (13). Chapter 2 explains how the church became institutionalized with a wide gap between pastor and people. Webster argues that the vision of pastoral leadership in the Church today looks more like the Corinthian super-apostles than the vision the apostles laid down (36). While the Christendom church may have worked for a while because it reflected the

values of the culture, he argues that it no longer fits the present cultural situation (13). Webster includes a helpful table describing the differences between the Christendom church and the household of faith church in an excursus (30). What follows is an effort of retrieval, relearning, and reappropriating the pastoral task for the modern-day church.

Webster seeks to dismantle the picture of the heroic, do-it-all pastor in chapter 3. Modern models of the pastoral office are wholly dependent on the senior or lead pastor for any effective ministry. The problem with such a picture is that it ignores and diminishes the priesthood of all believers. Webster writes, "Everything the Bible says to pastors, it says first to disciples" (56). Rather than a hero, pastors should focus on being a friend to their congregations, modeling the love of Christ to the church (71). Chapter 4 details what friendship can look like in a church that is not shackled by the divide between laity and clergy.

Pastors were never meant to do their work or exercise authority alone, argues Webster in chapter 5. He says, "Pastoral authority is not a one-man show. It is rooted in the shared solidarity of the people of God" (94). The place of pastoral authority, vision casting, and leadership is second behind the first place of family, mutuality, and the shared life of the congregation. However, this kind of relationship is near impossible when the senior leader is isolated from the congregation; in fact, it can foster the narcissistic tendencies of some pastors. Webster provides biblical and practical examples of what narcissism looks like and why the Christendom model can be a seedbed for such problems (95).

In chapter 6 Webster leads the reader to see the pastor as a shepherd rather than a manager. Congregations usually do not understand the pastoral role and end up putting the pastor on a pedestal with praise and expectation. But Webster says, "We love putting our pastors on pedestals because then we know right where we can find them" (108). The burden of the pastor-as-manager of ministry often creates an unhealthy dependence on the pastors and produces an unhealthy, ineffective congregation that takes little part in the work of ministry. Ultimately, this shepherding role was never intended to place a single pastor above the sheep (115).

Webster extends the mission of the church beyond the walls of the pastor's study to the entire church in chapter 7. Colossians 1:28–29 is perhaps the closest Paul comes to a comprehensive theology of ministry. Webster argues that pastors should pay at-

tention to the inclusive "we" in Paul's statement, "Him we proclaim" (121). The ministry of the church as whole is the proclamation of Christ; proclamation does not always require a pulpit (130).

Chapter 8 is a welcome addition as Webster explores the concept of the pastor-theologian. Contrary to simply caring about the congregation, the pastor is tasked as a biblical theologian "with prophetic and pastoral insight" to make disciples (134). Pastors, says Webster, "are theologians, primarily, not therapists" (135). However, one might not come to this conclusion listening to modern evangelical sermons. Webster calls for a commitment to theologically robust preaching that is aimed at making disciples.

In chapter 9, Webster focuses on restoring the Christian tradition's emphasis on wisdom and intellectual rigor. Webster says that Christian pastors may think Christianly about their sermon, but when it comes to other organizational issues, they revert to thinking secularly (154). God possesses all wisdom, and his wisdom affects all areas of life. Knowing this, pastors have the responsibility of framing all areas of life in God's wisdom and insight. Webster identifies the intense American individualism of the Christendom church, and the accompanying envy, as a major obstacle in effective ministry. The way to achieve victory over these obstacles is through "the slow work of life-on-life, loving discipleship" (171). Webster concludes the book in chapter 10 by directing the reader to the path of pastoral renewal in the tradition of the New Testament.

Pastoral Identity is a clarion call for renewed pastoral ministry in the wake of the pastor-as-CEO church life. In many ways it is a call back to the basics of discipleship for the whole church. Weaved throughout the book are personal stories that put flesh and bone to the kind of pastoral life Webster advocates. He provides a helpful and practical excursus on "Organic/Relational Church Growth Initiatives for the Household of Faith" that will spark thought on various methods of church growth that hold sway over many churches today (64). Webster's counsel is not denominationally specific, so it has a wide range of application. This book would be a helpful addition to an introductory class on pastoral ministry or theology or for the training of pastors in the local church.

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