Canadian-American Theological Review

A Journal of Theology, Scripture, and Culture

Contents

CANADIAN-AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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CONTRIBUTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

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Contents

Forward

This combined issue of *Canadian-American Theological Review* features a diverse selection of articles that concern subjects ranging from evolution and the Christian faith to comparative analyses of religion and violence in the works of René Girard and Karl Barth, and the methodological suppositions of Black and Dalit Theologies. The penultimate article entitled "Antisemitism, Violence, and Invective against the Old Testament: Reinhold Krause's *Sportpalast* Speech, 1933," by David A. R. Clark, along with the article by Benjamin M. MacDonald, were originally presented at the interdisciplinary theology conference on "Peace and Violence in Scripture and Theology," sponsored by the Canadian-American Theological Association (CATA) at Wycliffe College, Toronto, Ontario, October 20, 2018. Clark's essay won the Jack and Phyllis Middleton Memorial Award for Excellence in Bible and Theology, awarded to the best paper by a graduate student or non-tenured professor.

The final article, by Michael J. Gorman, was originally a keynote lecture given at the theology conference entitled "Participation in God's Mission," held at Northeastern Seminary in March 2016. It was subsequently developed for lectures given at Fuller Theological Seminary in April 2016 and Nazarene Theological College in October 2016, and finally published in his book, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018). It appears in this issue with permission from Cascade Books.

Christopher Zoccali, editor-in-chief

The Progress (or Extinction?) of Modern Creationism: A Critical Review of Crossway's *Theistic Evolution*

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Abstract

The evangelical debate over creation, evolution, and intelligent design continues well into the twenty-first century. As part of this ongoing drama, Crossway recently released a thousand-page critique of theistic evolution in a book by that title. The volume's many authors aim to settle the conflict once and for all by a three-pronged analysis—scientific, philosophical, and theological. This article is an extended, critical review of *Theistic Evolution* (2017) giving special attention to modernism and biblical-theological dimensions. The last portion weighs in heavily on the ever-present confusion regarding miracles and divine action in Christian theological discourse. While primary attention is given to the creationist-ID case, the review also identifies fresh correctives for evolutionary creation model(s) (primarily of the American variety) and offers an appraisal of the debate at large.

Introduction

Few Christians today are unaffected, in one way or another, by the debate on origins, biblical interpretation, and various "creationist" movements. This is just as true today as it was during the Scopes Trial of the early 1900s.[1] Far from cooling down, the debate has escalated to epic proportions. The year 2017 alone saw the publication of substantial, multi-authored works such as *Four Views on*

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[1] For useful accounts of how creationism became part of the current culture-war fabric, see Karl Giberson, *Saving Darwin* (New York: Harper One, 2009) and Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) in conjunction with George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 8th edition (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2018); Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017); Mark Noll and Luke Harlow (eds.), *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design (Zondervan),[2] *Adam and the Genome* (Brazos),[3] *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation?* (IVP Academic),[4] *Evolution and the Fall* (Eerdmans),[5] and Crossway's thousand-page *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*.[6] This isn't even to mention the hurricane of public events, conferences, debates, and otherwise that have occurred in the same general period. 2018-19 is also continuing the trend.[7]

From a practical and social perspective, all of this means extra pressure on truth-seekers, students, and teachers to make up their minds and join one "tribe" or another. Combined with what appear to be a number of fundamental confusions regarding undergirding philosophies and linguistic systems, the subject seems bound to cause increasing frustration amongst parties, whether they are directly involved or gazing from a distance.

Yet, clarity occasionally emerges out of the fog of war. In that case, the polemics, size and energy of *Theistic Evolution* stands out among others. What follows is a hopefully helpful critical review of this book, which begins by looking at strengths and positive contributions, and then moves on into various criticisms. Due to the nature of this review and publication, my focus will primarily be ideological, historical, exegetical, and theological. Those who want a more scientific review will have to look elsewhere.[8]

Preliminary Remarks

Before reviewing the book, a few preliminary observations should be made to help orient the reader.

First of all, *Theistic Evolution* is the third major work of its kind in recent

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2   J. B. Stump, ed., *Four Views of Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2017).

3   Scot McKnight and Dennis Venema, *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017)

4   Kenneth Keathley, J. B. Stump, and Joe Aguirre, eds., *Old Earth or Evolutionary Creation?: Discussing Origins with Reasons to Believe and BioLogos* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

5   William Cavanaugh and James K. A. Smith, eds., *Evolution and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

6   2016 was also an active year. See Denis Lamoureux, *Evolution: Scripture and Nature Say Yes!* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); Kathryn Applegate and J. B. Stump, eds., *How I Changed My Mind About Evolution: Evangelicals Reflect on Faith and Science* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), among others.

7   See Stanley Rosenberg, et. al*., Finding Ourselves after Darwin: Conversations on the Image of God, Original Sin, and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); Kyle Greenwood, ed., *Since the Beginning: Interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); Andrew Torrance and Thomas McCall, eds., *Knowing Creation: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, 1 vol. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018); Vern Poythress, *Interpreting Eden* (Wheaton: Crossway). Cf. the somewhat related, James K. A. Smith and Michael Gulker, eds., *All Things Hold Together in Christ: A Conversation on Faith, Science, and Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

8   Special thanks to Crossway for providing me with a complimentary copy for this review.

times. The first two are *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?: Biblical and Scientific Responses* (2009) and *God and Evolution* (2010).[9] Both are collections of articles written by different authors which, as a whole, argue against evolutionary creation[10] using both scientific and theological critiques. *Theistic Evolution* is generally the same type of book, only more comprehensive.

Second, the contemporary theologian's experience of reading books on this subject is, admittingly, a bit awkward. Perusing (for example) *Four Views on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* is like taking a strange journey back into time. All four of the contributors generally write and argue as if the past 350 years of theology had never happened. Yes, there is obvious reference to more recent theories and concepts (like Darwinism). But generally speaking, the modes of thought, terminology, biblical scholarship, and theological categories and concepts do not advance past early modernism and post-reformation scholasticism in any significant manner.[11] The authors seem unaware (or simply do not care) about the demise of classical theism and ongoing revolution in the idea of God.[12] It is therefore challenging for the contemporary theologian to get excited about a debate where all the major premises stem from a potentially flawed (if not simply outdated) framework. The platter of options typically offered in this debate is thoroughly entrenched in modernism and the Enlightenment project. Readers who question such a framework (thus proposing "fifth," "sixth," etc., perspectives) generally aren't able to join the conversation.[13] This leads to a third feature.

I question many of the premises of modernism, and therefore write as a

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9   See Norman C. Nevin, ed., *Should Christians Embrace Evolution? Biblical and Scientific Responses* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009) and Jay Richards, ed., *God and Evolution* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2010).

10   By default, I will use "evolutionary creation," only using "theistic evolution" when speaking from the perspective of critics. Other than this distinction, the two terms are generally used synonymously for this article.

11   E.g., models of creation, various philosophies of epistemology, conceptual frameworks and metaphors for God's agency, the relationship of "transcendence and immanence," interpretational history, etc. There are some exceptions to this trend (most noticeably by evolutionary creationists, who stress the literary origins and context of the scriptures), but they remain exceptions.

12   See, for example, Langdon Gilkey, "God," in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks,* ed. Peter Hodgson and Robert King (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 88–113; Schubert Ogden, "The Reality of God," in *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 1–70; Theodore Jennings, *Beyond Theism: A Grammar of God-Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 13–28; Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 19–21.

13   Some involved in this debate (like Stump, the editor of the *Four Views* volume) are aware that only the major streams are presented and that others aren't (i.e., cherry-nut and maple-pecan didn't make it on the ice-cream menu). Richards (editor of *God and Evolution*) shows some vague familiarity with newer theologies but seems to have a hard time grasping that theology itself is a product of temporal, located human thought (including Western conceptions of God). Nevin (editor of *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?*) shows even less openness to the possibility that classical theism and western monotheism is one perspective among many.

cautious, "post-modern Christian." I will give attention to the central, historical-philosophical frameworks behind *Theistic Evolution* and contemporary evolutionary creation thought because that (in my view) is where the debate really lies. Indeed, as noted below, the "turning point" in my own story was realizing that the ID movement (and its creationist variants)—*not* only (some variants of) evolutionary creation—has fallen prey to contemporary trends of modern, secular philosophies. Hence the "*modern* creationism" in the title of this article. "There is no view from nowhere," as the saying goes. We need to start acting like it.

This leads to a final (and obvious) focal point of orientation: the perspective taken in this review is inevitably situated. In fact, this review is somewhat of a personal milestone (which will hopefully add to both its depth and meaning). I remember, as a teenager, traveling hours to the Black Hills to see "Dr. Dino" (Kent Hovind) and hear popular arguments for young-earth creationism, challenging my biology teacher in high school over this "essential" issue, and then entering college to realize it wasn't really that essential after all. Later on, still a lover of chemistry and physics (yet a theology major), I took Evolutionary Biology and Origins during my last semester at college and labored away at a paper about the orchestration of nature needed to induce genetic drift. Around that time, news was making the rounds about the firing of (what would have been) my Old Testament seminary professor because of his views on this debate.

The journey continued into another phase of unrestrained curiosity. After reading a dozen or so more books on the subject, I started presenting at American Scientific Affiliation meetings as a faculty member. It was humbling to be surrounded by qualified scientists and exciting to hear about new research. Yet, I also felt alone as a theologian, confused about the pseudo-deist theological ethos in general, and turned off at the distasteful hallway criticisms of creationists and ID advocates.[14] It was a phase of life with tremendous growth but also lots of doubts. Like countless others, I left the naïve views of my youth but wasn't sure what to do next.[15] All the while, I was married to a biology geek and therapist to bounce ideas off of, hiding from heresy hunts at one church and organizational affiliation or another,[16] and quietly following the debate—despite condescending calls to study other things, "let others handle this," and "stick with your area" (whatever that was).

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14 Some of my mixed responses to these experiences were published in "Resuming the Conversation," *God and Nature Magazine* (Winter 2015).

15 Among other things, reading N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), Guillermo Gonzalez, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2004) and works about the post-fundamentalist / "post-conservative" journey, proved helpful in various ways.

16 My luck ran out in Fall 2018, where I was fired (a month after being promoted to Dean) explicitly because of my dissenting views on the holy triad of conservative evangelicalism (male authority in all spheres of life, biblicism, and young earth creationism).

Fast-forward to the present, I write on this subject as one who is (a) deeply concerned about the spiritual harm and anti-intellectualism inspired by religious fundamentalism (characteristic of most creationist movements), (b) generally convinced that ID has legitimate critiques of some mainstream scientific ideas[17] and has some interesting philosophical/academic proposals,[18] but ultimately operates from an unworkable theoretical framework (especially theologically), and (c) sees early American "biologos" projects as rough and confused,[19] but recent ones as workable models and the most persuasive.[20]

Positive Steps Forward

We begin our review with positive remarks.

As one approaches *Theistic Evolution,* it becomes evident that it is a product of considerable energy and labor.[21] There are 31 chapters and over two-dozen contributors, all credentialed researchers/professors in their fields. Although there is (sadly) no interaction with *Four Views,* many essays manage to include some reference to publications from 2017 (e.g., McKnight and Venema's *Adam and the Genome*). The book follows the order of the subtitle, having three sections of (1) Scientific Critique, (2) Philosophical Critique, and (3) Theological Critique. As a whole, the volume generally favors a literal interpretation of Genesis (and therefore a historical Adam and Eve as the first humans), a modern metaphysic characterized by various dualisms (e.g., "natural"/"supernatural"; zero-sum divine agency, etc.), and thoroughly integrates the specific ideology and arguments of ID. "Theistic evolution" is viewed with serious alarm and as a growing heresy in Christianity. The authors try hard to pull readers away from this dangerous cliff.

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17 In other words, there are holes in the standard "Neo-Darwinian Synthesis" and in the purported evolutionary "tree of life" models of early paleontology. Of course, many contend that theologians either (a) have no right to have an opinion on these matters (therefore allowing some agnosticism) and/or (b) must "trust the relevant experts" (disallowing any agnosticism and demanding intellectual assent). I think there is a legitimate logic behind each of these responses, but also problems if they are not rightly qualified.

18 E.g., the breaking down of modern scientific compartmentalizations of disciplines; the "design inference," etc.

19 E.g., the work of Francis Collins, Howard Van Till, Denis Lamoureux, and others.

20 E.g., D. Haarsma's essay in *Four Views,* Sarah Ritchie's contributions in the "Divine Agency" blog series at biologos.com, some of Denis Alexanders work, and the biblical-theological contributions of N. T. Wright and J. Richard Middleton on the subject.

21 This is aside from the visual and physical elements of the book itself: the thin, flexible, and flat spine was a wise choice by the printers (no worry about cracking for this large piece). There was a mild, audible loosening of the flat fore-edge textblock from the case after a full read, but nothing seriously concerning. The primarily black and white cover is bold enough (no dust jacket; an extremely modest French groove), as is the choice of black, contrastive end paper. The formatting, signatures, and nose between the pages are nondescript. Likewise with the main text font, although the titles and subtitles manage to escape with a surprisingly pleasant, bold sans serif. I located two apparent typos: footnote 53 ("216–12"; not sure what this means); and "defenses of the tradition [*sic*] Christian position" (558).

Though most are not original to the book, the beneficial contributions found in *Theistic Evolution* are numerous. Many authors rightly highlight the power and influence of scientism in the present, Western, cultural milieu. "Given our society's tendency to put science in the place of authority," writes Gauger, "we may be tempted to accept what we are told as proven established science" (433).[22] Since the "scientific consensus" has been repeatedly wrong in the past, this is an important observation to keep in mind when embroiled in any scientific debate. Shaw continues this line of thought into academia, saying that "[t]he common view that scientists are free thinkers who are open to all new ideas and can pursue such without hindrances is not what occurs in reality" (528). Similarly, he argues that peer review is no guarantee of truth, and that political power-plays are at work.

Different authors address other starting points. Moreland asserts that "[w]hen it comes to the task of defining or giving the essential characteristics of science, that task belongs to philosophers and historians of science, and not to scientists themselves" (556). This is a highly controversial statement that is likely to offend many practicing scientists. Nevertheless, it is a proposal worth pondering, especially given the modern university's tendency to compartmentalize and specialize. (Who has the "bird's-eye-view" over the whole natural sciences division, and how much weight should that person/position have? What "degree" would that even entail?). Meyer and Nelson also carefully point out the shifting "criteria" as to what counts as "scientific" (e.g., "testable," "falsifiable," "observable") (571–74). The *evolution of science* itself is therefore an important phenomenon for any person or group who want the authority of "science."

Theistic Evolution also contains some legitimate critiques on particular issues. For example, Currid ably dismantles the somewhat oversimplified dichotomy of Walton's "functional origins" and "material origins" interpretation of Genesis.[23] Currid concludes, perhaps legitimately, that "[t]o interpret Genesis 1 as merely about functions and not about origins is a failure to account for some of the very prominent features of the narrative."[24]

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22 Since this article is a review, simple page numbers within the text will be provided for convenience when directly citing *Theistic Evolution*.

23 John Currid, "Theistic Evolution is Incompatible with the Teachings of the Old Testament," 850, in response to John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2009), 1–16. A further critique of Walton's view that is not undertaken in *Theistic Evolution* might target Walton's crass description of "the ancients," "the ancient world," and "ancient near eastern thought," which functions poorly over a thousand years of history, multiple cultures, worldviews, languages, etc. These oversimplifications distort the historical-theological picture (i.e., the "ancient thought" of Egypt in the 1300s BCE is not simply the same "ancient thought" of the Persians in the 400s BCE, etc.), and would be as sloppy as saying "Americans believe _____ about _____ ," without taking into account historical change. This may not substantially alter Walton's larger argument but it is noteworthy.

24 Currid, "Theistic Evolution," 851.

There are likely other positive contributions in the book in the science section. But, as noted in the introduction, these fall outside the scope of this particular review.

Critique Area 1: Contradictions and Incoherence

There are a number of areas and aspects of *Theistic Evolution* that appear contradictory and internally incoherent. The authors make conflicting claims within the same volume about the same issues. Some of these incidents are more serious than others.

In Moreland's essay, the need to carefully define (and *think about how* to define) various terms, such as "science" and otherwise, is apparent. As already noted above, readers are told that defining "the essential characteristics of science" is not a task belonging "to scientists themselves" (556). Dilley's article also follows this route in the same section, studiously beginning his discussion with the preface, "Before turning to the main argument, a few definitions are necessary" (595). It is somewhat confusing, then, that wedged between both of these articles is the following declaration by Meyer and Nelson: "fruitful science does not need definitions: it needs creativity, hard work, and evidence most of all" (591).

More perplexing is that the book cannot seem to clearly define "methodological naturalism" (henceforth "MN") and whether (or to what extent) theistic evolutionists are truly committed to it. This is notable because the concept of MN is mentioned in almost every chapter of the book, and much of its critique hinge on this connection: theistic evolution operates on the basis of MN, and MN has serious problems, which means there are serious problems with theistic evolution. However, these connections are not so straightforward.

Regarding definitions, Meyer says that, "Methodological naturalism asserts that, to qualify as scientific, a theory must explain by strictly physical or material causes—that is, non-intelligent or non-purposive causes" (562). Dilley, however, says MN ultimately means that "natural explanations, rather than theological ones, belong in science" (595). Perhaps this is a crass summary of Meyer's definition, but it is problematic (or at least confusing) for a number of reasons.[25] Apparently not satisfied with this definition, Dilley says a couple pages later, "If

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[25] For example, it would seem possible to involve purpose and intelligence in something without it necessarily being theological. (In fact, ID proponents regularly insist that "intelligent design" is ultimately agnostic and need not necessarily be attributed to theism. How genuine this claim is, especially given Meyer's new book defending theism, remains dubious.) Second of all, "causes" are very different than "explanations" (to identify a cause of something isn't necessarily to explain it; this is a faulty assumption in modern thought, which will be explained more below). Third, what is meant by "strictly" physical and material causes? Is there such thing as *non*-strictly physical and material causes? This adjectival qualifier is consistently used throughout *Theistic Evolution* (along with "purely" or "natural causes *alone*") but never really explained.

methodological naturalism means anything at all, it means that God-talk is barred within science in toto . . . when scientists engage in scientific work *as* scientific work, they are to avoid religious language" (597–98). This would suggest that neither causes, or explanations, or boundaries are actually as much the issue of MN as *language* games.[26] Compounded with the fact that readers are also told that "methodological naturalism allows a complementary relationship between science and theology,"[27] locating the domain and boundaries of "methodological naturalism" in *Theistic Evolution* is a challenge, indeed.[28]

The confusion is amplified with regard to the second issue: are theistic evolutionists guilty of operating under MN, and to what degree or in what sense? At the beginning of the volume, Meyer more or less manipulates a quote by Darrel Falk[29] to say that Falk affirms MN. Even though Falk's position clearly does not fit the neat categories erected by the authors of *Theistic Evolution*, Meyer insists that, despite being "admirably clear," Falk's perspective on God's agency "is just another way of expressing a commitment—perhaps a distinctly Christian commitment—to methodological naturalism" (565). However, it is questionable why one would insist on placing thinkers inside this terminology/ideology since Meyer and Nelson later argue that theistic evolutionists affirm things that are *outside* "the domain of methodological naturalism," anyway (585).

Dilley also exhibits the same confused determination. Within the same page, Biologos[30] is said to have language "not precise" on the issue, and yet precise enough to assert that "Biologos. . . . *accepts* methodological naturalism," and he even speaks of "Biologos' *allegiance* to methodological naturalism" (602; emphasis mine). By the time one reaches the end of Dilley's article, Biologos is in danger of rank idolatry, for "theistic evolutionists cannot serve both God and methodological naturalism" (610). And yet Dilley then turns around and says just a few pages later (613) that Francis Collins' "discourse clearly *violates* methodological naturalism"! Thus, readers are essentially told that the Biologos group are *possibly* methodological naturalists who are also *religiously allegiant* methodological naturalists who substantially *compromise* methodological naturalism.[31]

Perhaps "methodological naturalism" is an unnecessary construct that

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26　I am using "language games" in a more generic sense (i.e., the linguistic turn as a whole) than the technical meaning given to it by Wittgenstein.

27　Ibid., 597.

28　For a clearer critique of MN, see Thomas Torrance, "Not Knowing Creation" in *Knowing Creation.*

29　This quote will be re-cited later in this review.

30　"Biologos" in the book and in this review may refer to the organization (www.biologos.com), to the specific views of the organization, or to any broad theory that attempts to harmonize Christianity and some version of evolutionary theory.

31　Moreland (636), also seems to define "naturalism" as roughly the same as "methodological naturalism": "The component of naturalism, then, is the belief that scientific knowledge is the only kind of knowledge there is, or that it is an immeasurably superior kind of knowledge."

confuses more than it clarifies.[32] What if a person interpreted Biologos (and any other person/group) on their own terms instead of constructing categories in which to peg them?[33] If evolutionary creation really has some innovative proposals (as the authors of *Theistic Evolution* maintain), one would expect certain frameworks and categories to break down anyway.

In any case, it is also not clear what is meant by "theistic evolution" in the book. The authors appear unable of conceiving that God's activity may be known and observable in the world apart from things "empirically detectable." But on the other hand, this scope of activity is broadened in some definitions to *any* type of detectability. Thus, one definition (the formal definition set out in the introduction) of theistic evolution is, "God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly to cause *any empirically detectable change* in the natural behavior of matter until all living things had evolved by purely natural processes" (67). Similarly, Dilley says that in theistic evolution, "God's design of biological phenomena (or history) is not *empirically detectable* using the rigorous methods of science."[34] On the other hand, Moreland later says that "the most pervasive definition of theistic evolution is that the general, naturalistic theory of evolution is true, and God is allowed somehow or another to be involved in the process as long as there is *no way to detect his involvement*."[35] Obviously, there is a massive difference between saying "God is not detectable" and "God is not empirically detectable through science." There many of ways in which human beings can

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32 Cf. Denis Alexander and Robert White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics: Grid or Gridlock?* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 20–21: "Christians have sometimes muddied the waters by trying to distinguish between what they have term 'methodological naturalism' and 'ontological naturalism.'"

33 Cf. "scientific concordism," another problematic, theoretical framework wherein Denis Lamoureux, *Evolution: Scripture and Nature Say Yes!* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 27, means "the belief that there is an alignment between the Bible and the facts of science." Lamoureux categorically denies such "concordism." The problem here is that there are so many exceptions to such "concordism" that it fails to be a meaningful category. If "scientific facts" are observations of the natural world in literal and/or descriptive language, then it is unclear why dozens of biblical passages that perform this function do not qualify (e.g., the stars in the sky are numerous, eating quail is eating meat, eagles fly, there is a river flowing outside the gate of Philippi, putting vinegar on a wound hurts, etc.). Thus, Haarsma, *Four Views*, 146, can legitimately say, "Genetics shows that we are one human family, as taught throughout the Bible." If there is any "scientific concordism" that *could* be categorically denied, it would be one in which scientific facts *distinctive to post-biblical eras* (e.g., heliocentrism) are not found in the scriptures, not that there exist no scientific facts in the scriptures whatsoever. Cf. McLeish, "The Science-and-Religion Delusion," in *Knowing Creation*, 321: "It is just not possible to define a moment in the history of thought that marks a temporal boundary between the 'prescientific' and the 'scientific.' The longing to understand, to go beneath the superficies of the world in thought, to reconstruct the workings of the universe in our minds, is a cultural activity as old as any other."

34 Dilley, 598–99 (cf. 626); emphasis mine. One also wonders what exactly is meant by the "rigorous methods of science," given Meyer's article on the shifting meaning of this enterprise and criteria for what qualifies as "scientific" at all (561–92).

35 Moreland, 643 (cf. 650); emphasis mine. Yet, Moreland then qualifies with "*scientifically* detectable" on p. 651 (emphasis mine), wondering if this merely includes empiricism and may extend beyond it to other means of knowledge, or simply means empiricism alone.

"detect" or come to know that another person or being in the world has acted, none of which necessarily need to be "empirical." But the authors do not seem aware of either this possibility or delineation.[36]

There also appears to be some confusion between detecting God's (or any-one's) activity (Moreland) from God's *design* (Meyer, Dilley). If, for example, I want to know if someone came to my office yesterday while I was gone, I'll ask a colleague next door or talk to the student directly in order to find out. But neither of these methods have anything to do with empiricism or "detecting design." Furthermore, "detecting design" may or may not say something about the immediacy or process of how the design came into being. If I walk out to the patio and see a poem sitting on the table, perhaps the author was there and wrote it an hour ago with a pen, or maybe it was printed ten years ago and was placed there last week without my knowledge, or maybe someone else wrote it on the author's behalf a century earlier and was only recently available for copying. The "design" is evident in the poem, but that in and of itself says little about how the poem on the table came to be. Similarly, ID theorists—and the authors of *Theistic Evolution*—regularly conflate "detecting design" with specific knowledge of how "God acted."[37] As it will be discussed below, God's activity is both diverse and mysterious, and whether or not any of it is "empirical" neither removes the possibility of God's action nor inflicts doubt on behalf of the knower of such action. That is, *there is such a thing as non-empirical knowledge.*[38] (The fact that this even has to be stated reveals the predominance of modernism.)

At one point, readers are told that in dealing with the Genesis text, "genre is important, although in considering such questions, one must always beware of false dichotomy."[39] This is good advice. But the authors of *Theistic Evolution* may have missed it since a false dichotomy between two genre categories in Genesis ("historical narrative" vs. all other options) is regularly erected.[40]

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36   The situation only gets more complicated with Grudem, who says "according to theistic evolution, God did not *act* directly, discretely, or discernibly in time to create plants, animals, or man. Indeed, theistic evolution insists that after the creation of the universe at the Big Bang, God did not *actively make* anything, but merely upheld (or observed) the ongoing natural processes that were themselves directly responsible for the origin of all life forms" (74). Grudem (along with Meyers, 45) does not seem to realize that evolutionary creationists simply have a different concept of what it means for God to "actively make" something. In many non-creationist models, "creation" and "evolution" are one and the same.

37   Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that David Bentley Hart says in *The Experience of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013)*,* 38: "As either a scientific or a philosophical project, Intelligent Design theory is a deeply problematic undertaking; and, from a theological or metaphysical perspective, it is a massive distraction."

38   In fact, "most of the things we know to be true, often quite indubitably, do not fall within the realm of what can be tested by empirical methods; they are by their nature episodic, experiential, local, personal, intuitive, or purely logical" (Hart, *The Experience of God,* 71).

39   Reeves, "Bringing Home the Bacon," 712.

40   See Grudem, "Biblical and Theological Introduction," 63–64; *idem.,* "Theistic Evolution

On a number of fronts, one also notices a selective use of "mystery," "materialism," and the limited capacities of human reason and rationality. These negative concepts are summoned to service at rather convenient times so that one is left wondering if there aren't perhaps double-standards operating beneath the surface. For example, Axe observes that "after all the effort we humans have put into understanding how life works, we're left with a grand mystery" (88) and "[w]e humans pride ourselves in our rational faculties, but the truth is that we aren't as rational as we pretend to be" (103). He states this only to confidently claim in the same essay, "Life in all its forms is obviously the work of genius, and clueless causes are so far removed from genius as the east is from the west" (99), among other such things.[41] The position seems to be, then, that theistic evolutionists need to be reminded about human fallibility and limitations of knowledge, but those criticizing theistic evolutionists do not need this reminder.[42]

At other points in the book, evolutionary creationists bear the charge of "materialism" for arguing that the physical world (and its various processes) reveals God's handiwork.[43] But at the same time, a premium is placed on empirical, scientific knowledge (which is primarily oriented around the "material world") when it comes to God's action in creation.[44] In fact, the same kinds of claims about God's revelation through the world is made by ID advocates regarding astronomy, but are strangely exempt from the charge of "materialism"—even while arguing side-by-side with theistic evolutionists about "physical laws" giving rise to the solar system and the earth.[45] In other words, if ID advocates, the authors of

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Undermines Twelve Creation Events," 783–820; Currid, "Theistic Evolution is Incompatible with the Teachings of the Old Testament," 858.

41 Cf. Similar sentiments in Axe's *Undeniable* (New York: HarperOne, 2016). To respond to this claim, one could seemingly make a similar objection to Paul: shame and foolishness is as far away from honor and wisdom as the east is from the west. Yet, the cross transforms our entire way of thinking about these categories; this kind of paradoxical theology is a hallmark of Jesus, Paul, and early Christianity. It would perhaps not be a surprise, then, that ultimately at the heart of all randomness (i.e., genetic mutation, quantum mechanics, etc.) lies the heart of all purpose and intentionality.

42 Cf. Moreland's claim that knowledge doesn't mean certainty (639), while he then turns around to critique evolutionary creationists because they undermine the certainty of biblical knowledge (642).

43 The terms "materialism" or "materialistic" is used over 30 times in the volume—mostly (if not entirely) negative and attributed to evolution.

44 In addition to the quote of Meyer on p. 222, see 669.

45 See Meyer, 34, and related discussions on "self-organization" via "physical" or "natural laws," 232–34, 270–71. Also note the main argument of Gonzalez, *The Privileged Planet*, which was (ironically) launched by the Discovery Institute. Three times (220, 225, 228) Meyer negatively cites Lamoreaux's metaphor of "the deck is stacked" for life's outcome without realizing this is the same language used *in favor* of ID when it comes to fine-tuning, astronomy, and the formation of our universe (being "rigged for life"). Erkki Vesa Rope Kojonen, *Intelligent Design: A Philosophical and Theological Analysis* (dissertation for University of Helsinki, 2014), 298, remarks, "The ID theorists emphasize only the aspect of God as a designer, and sometimes create the impression that God's activity could not be detected without gaps in natural processes. This

Theistic Evolution, and theistic evolutionists can all make the same argument that the planets and stars "evolved from physical laws" (a scientific way of saying "this is one aspect of how God create it") without being charged with materialism (or heresy), is it really justified to start bringing the charge of materialism upon the onset of cellular function and DNA information?[46]

It should also be noted that this internal incoherence within ID expands into other areas outside the book, such as the theses propounded in Wiker and Witt's *A Meaningful World.*[47] In a fascinating discussion about the discovery of elements and the periodic table, the authors talk about the role of aesthetics in discovery, the presumption of order, and, given that "[h]uman beings live on the level of effects and strive to discover the causes,"[48] how amazing it is that everything necessary to obtain the periodic table is within the grasp of human observation and knowledge. It would seem that the same God-given dynamics and anthropological inclinations are at work in the scientist's search for the knowable "mechanisms" or "natural causes" behind the origin of life—even if such searches are premature. But, here, the ID movement and authors of *Theistic Evolution* (ironically) declare in advance that this is a waste of time, and that the answers are already known.[49]

On a different front, it is unclear how the authors of *Theistic Evolution* understand the basic elements of Gen 1–3, beyond a raw, literal, historical reading. Some authors warm-up to the idea of Genesis being a polemic (853–56), while others are cool on this approach (718). What is clear is that there is no actual exegesis of Gen 1–3. This is perhaps the most baffling omission in the whole book: *a study of the literary origins, occasion, dating, audience, and authorship of Genesis (or any of the biblical canonical writings, for that matter) is absent.*[50]

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is puzzling, since the ID theorists also believe that the laws of nature are designed." Cf. Haarsma, *Four Views,* 222 n. 2.

46 At this point, it is clear that the life/non-life distinction is absolutely vital for the pro-ID argument to work (more on this below).

47 Benjamin Wiker and Jonathan Witt, *A Meaningful World: How the Arts and Sciences Reveal the Genius of Nature* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2006). Jonathan Witt is a Senior Fellow with Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture.

48 Wiker and Witt, *A Meaningful World,* 145.

49 For example, Meyer, 227, says, "And yet, some scientists claim that we must await the discovery of new natural laws to explain the origin of biological information . . . we will not discover such a law." This is a confusing argument since Meyer himself has claimed to know a law that explains the origin of information—the law of intelligent design (i.e., intelligence is *always* behind complex, functionally-specific information). But, if this is the case, why are not other scientists allowed to even entertain the possibility that some *other* knowable process is responsible—whether closely related to a "physical law" or not, and whether or not it is a single process or a series of intermediary "laws" that stand between such information and intelligence? In other words, to pit the argument as "physical laws" vs. "intelligent design" is a false dichotomy and a premature conclusion; there may be a whole host of other things that come to the table over the next two centuries of discovery that need not fit in one of these two categories.

50 Unless one includes Currid's brief dismissal of a post-exilic occasion (874–75).

These basic elements of biblical study are apparently viewed by the contributors as unneeded or unimportant details that add little to the general thrust of the text.[51] This leaves curious students of the Bible at a loss for how they are to interpret the Genesis text like any other piece of biblical (or nonbiblical) literature.

There are also puzzling standards regarding the tone and charity of argumentation. The authors charge theistic evolutionists of "outlandish rhetoric" (367) and using "ridicule to bully skeptics into submission" (367). Thus, "Our friends in the theistic evolution community would be wise to follow suit—or at least tone down the rhetoric" (401), and the Biologos people in particular should "should slow down, take a deep breath, and form integrative teams" (558). But, then authors in the same volume turn around and charge theistic evolutionists of "tucking their tails between their legs at the first sign of conflict between the Bible and science" (647), becoming the church's "grave diggers" (639, 649), functioning as "intellectual pacifism that lulls people to seep while the barbarians are at the gates" (645), and being "an embarrassment" (722).

Critique Area #2: Pseudo-Scholarship and Uncritical Thought

Theistic Evolution also contains cases of poor scholarship and illogical reasoning. This is especially true in the "theological" section of the book. But before going on to those chapters, a few more observations need to be made regarding aforementioned controversies.

Meyer concludes at a key juncture in his article that "[a]s Robert Boyle (1627–1691) often argued, the job of the scientist (or what he calls the 'natural philosopher') is not to assume beforehand what God must have done, but to study the world to find out what God actually has done" (222)." He further concludes (quoting Sean Carroll) that "[m]ethodological naturalism . . . amounts to assuming part of the answer ahead of time."[52] However, this seems to miss a key fact: *all scientists do this out of necessity*. All people possess some assumptions about what is possible and impossible and carry this filter(s) everywhere they go.[53] Claiming to have knowledge about God means knowing (in some sense) what God would do

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51 The same is true for *God and Evolution* and *Should Christians Believe in Evolution?*. The closest the authors get in the latter volume is a one-paragraph referral to an obscure book written by a Southern Baptist professor. At least for these volumes and *Theistic Evolution,* then, this would appear to be the sum total of what critics of evolutionary creation have to offer regarding Genesis and biblical scholarship.

52 Meyer, 586. Cf. Dilley's criticism of Collin's regarding the formation of the eye on p. 613. I tend to think both Dilley and Collins are incorrect for both assuming to know what a good or bad design of the eye (or any bodily feature) really is; both cases presume a privileged position of presumed knowledge that might easily be premature.

53 This is what happens by presupposing (for example) the laws of logic in any discourse (e.g., A cannot be A and non-A at same time and same sense, etc.). This is true in theology, as (for instance) "God does not lie" (Titus 1:2), or "tempt" anyone (Jas 1:13–14) or do anything contrary to God's own revealed character.

in certain situations.[54] The authors of *Theistic Evolution* make very specific claims about what God must have done precisely to conform with what they believe aligns to God's own character (i.e., God didn't use "natural mechanisms").[55]

More importantly, all persons have *a determining criterion for deciding what qualifies* as "what God actually has done." ID theorists are upfront for their determining criteria: God *didn't actually do* a, b, and c in natural history (as evolutionary creationists and Darwinists claim) because of various reasons (e.g., it contradicts the Bible, church tradition, science, and goes against God's character, etc.). In the most extraordinary statement of the book (which will be explored more thoroughly below), Meyer says "I think the question of when God acted should remain a matter for empirical investigation and should not be determined by our aesthetic or theological preferences altogether" (222). Clearly, there *is* a filter for determining how to know if God has acted—and here it is scientific empiricism (not theology, experience, revelation, communal memory, or anything else).[56]

In a different article, Meyer, Nelson, and Gauger argue that some recent evolutionary mechanisms fail to explain certain phenomena. They write, "each of these proposed new mechanisms still fails to explain the origin of the genetic and/or epigenetic info necessary to produce new forms of life . . . . [so] why say that these mechanisms represent God's way of creating new forms of life?"[57] Conceding all the assumptions of this argument for the moment, readers might ask: but don't *some* "mechanisms" represent God's way of doing *something*? And if so, why is ID exempt from the charge of "materialism" and "naturalism"? ID proponents fiercely argue that natural selection and mutation are insufficient for certain outcomes (and see it as competing with God's immediate intervention). But, for what outcomes natural selection and mutation *are* responsible for (i.e., even the

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54 See William Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* (Louisville: WJK, 1996), 190–95; Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 36–37; Alistair McGrath, *Christian Theology,* 6th ed. (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2017), 12–13; 137–44.

55 The same general criticism would apply to the following argument: "Shouldn't the *evidence,* rather than an abstract rule like methodological naturalism, decide the outcome of a scientific investigation?" (Nelson and Meyer, 566). This seems to be a category mistake, since evidence only has meaning within a framework of interpretation (which is what MN supposedly is); this would make as much sense as saying, "shouldn't the *finger prints* determine the trial and not the laws of jurisprudence?" Or maybe, "shouldn't the *ingredients* determine what the pie tastes like and not the recipe?" Even if evidence and MN *were* comparable categories, evidence remains meaningless without a larger context and system of interpretation, so appealing to it (as if others aren't doing this) gets the conversation nowhere.

56 On a different, though related, the historical-situatedness of various claims is often not considered. For example, in a point repeated by ID advocates, we read: "But do laws of nature generate information?" (Meyer, 226). What is actually being asked is, "Do the *regularities we know about at this point in history* generate information?" Important qualifications like these easily get lost in the debate.

57 Meyer, Gauger, and Nelson, "Theistic Evolution and the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis," 261.

slightest genetic drift), why is *this* not viewed in competition with God's intervention? These are good questions readers of *Theistic Evolution* might ponder.

We now move on to the actual "theological" section of the book.

Grudem is set to carry the "theological" weight of *Theistic Evolution* with his "Biblical and Theological Introduction" (61) and chapter 27, titled (in typical Grudem-esque-numerical fashion) "Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines."[58] The introduction contains a number of problematic assertions. "From the standpoint of theology," we read, "the debate is primarily about the proper interpretation of the first three chapters of the Bible" (61). As noted earlier, one would expect a scholarly discussion about the first three chapters of the Bible if this were the case, but it cannot be found in *Theistic Evolution.* Regardless, the point of this statement would be contested by many theologians, especially as it only makes sense within a literal reading of Genesis (i.e., the debate is probably *not* about the first three chapters of Genesis). It also tends to confuse the study of the Bible with theology (which, while related, are distinct enterprises). Even within a creationist framework, it is not clear why other issues—like epistemology, philosophy, theology, ethics, and everything else being debated—are *ipso facto* subordinate to an interpretation of *any* three chapters of the Bible.[59] Nevertheless, this hermeneutical reductionism continues farther: "Without the foundation laid down in those three chapters, the rest of the Bible would make no sense" (62). Given that (a) there are multiple creation-themed portions of the Bible (e.g., Prov 8; Job 26 and 28; Ps 104; Is 42), (b) Genesis is not at all the most cited OT book in the NT,[60] and (c) Gen 1–3 may have more to do with the rise and fall of Israel than with the chemical/cosmological creation of the cosmos, this would appear to be an overstatement.

Grudem then notes that the contributors of the book aren't going to "frame the discussion of this book in terms of whether the Bible's teachings about creation should be interpreted 'literally'" (63) because this is a loose and potentially confusing term. Strangely, then, the rest of the chapter—and all of chapter 27—assumes and establishes what can only be described as a strictly literalist

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58 Cf. the titles of Wayne Grudem, "Does κεφαλή ('Head') Mean 'Source' Or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *Trinity Journal* 6:1 (Spring 1985:38–59); "Complete List of Eighty-Two Examples of *Authenteō* ('to exercise authority') in Ancient Greek Literature, by H. Scott Baldwin," in Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than 100 Disputed Questions* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); "79 factors that will help nations escape from poverty and move toward prosperity," from waynegrudem.com, based on Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). In all of these cases, the statistics are irrelevant to the arguments being made. The assumption is there, nevertheless, that big numbers indicate truth or significance.

59 Grudem is, of course, reiterating the sentiment of Dyson Hague, "The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis," in Torrey et. al., eds., *The Fundamentals: The Famous Sourcebook of Foundational Biblical Truths* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), 101.

60 The most commonly cited OT books in the NT are the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah.

interpretation. The other authors in the "theological" section of the book do the same.[61] It therefore seems that the contributors want to avoid the charge of fundamentalist, literalist biblicism, but too many of their arguments depend on it, so it must (functionally) be implemented any way.

By the time one comes to chapter 27, it becomes apparent that there is no difference between topical proof-texting and theology—nor a difference between one's own interpretation and what the "Bible says."[62] The chapter sets out to summarize twelve beliefs of theistic evolutionists "that conflict with the teachings of the Bible." Each one, however, depends on a strictly literalist reading of Genesis. None involve any discussion of the original contexts (cultural, literary, historical, textual, etc.) of the texts that are cited or contain any signs of secondary biblical scholarship. They interact with virtually no primary or secondary theological sources, ancient or recent. Grudem's own interpretations are continually conflated with "the truthfulness of the Bible," which he argues is the first "significant Christian doctrine that . . . [is] undermined or denied by theistic evolution" (821).[63] It is argued that theistic evolutionists also fail to realize that their views undermine "belief in the goodness of God" (834) and "will lead to scant praise for God's wisdom" (832). Once again, Grudem interacts with no literature that specifically addresses these kinds of objections[64] and writes as if the audience is hunting for apologetic ammunition instead of carefully assessing the arguments. In short, the intelligibility of Grudem's chapter appears to depend upon the audience's (a) loyalty to Grudem's starting points and (b) general unfamiliarity with the general disciplines of systematic theology and biblical studies.[65]

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61   See Currid "Theistic Evolution"; Guy Waters, "Theistic Evolution."
62   This is no surprise, as his own *Systematic Theology* is (despite being a best-seller) not a systematic theology, but a selective theological dictionary of topically-organized proof-texts. This has long been noted and need not be elaborated on here.
63   Pages 823–26 consist of making a statement (that depends on a literal simplistic reading) and then asking the readership whether they are true or not, over and over again, as if this were in any way an argument, a case study in doing theology, or some sort of compelling reasoning.
64   There are entire videos produced by Biologos (https://www.youtube.com/user/biologosfoundation) that give praise for God's wisdom in creation (e.g., in supernovas, biological complexity, etc.). Most books written by evolutionary creationists also conform to this pattern.
65   Predictably, "The real issue," he argues, isn't even theology or interpretation or academics, but "the truthfulness of the Bible" (823) and "the watershed issue of biblical inerrancy" (823). Grudem quotes a substantial portion of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and then singles out John Walton as a particularly guilty party (827). It is noteworthy that the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) is the first of a two-part production by the "International Council on Biblical Inerrancy," the second of which is the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics (1982). Both documents reveal the young-earth creationist (and flood-geology) orientation of the Council (and of the driving figures, Norman Geisler and R.C. Sproul). Of interest is Article XII in the Inerrancy Statement and Article XV, XIX, and XXII in the Hermeneutics Statement. It is also noteworthy that Grudem appears unaware of over a dozen Christian books that specifically critique this modernist (and highly problematic) bibliology. See, for example, Craig Allert, *A High View of Scripture?: The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Carlos Bovell, *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger*

The next chapter is "Theistic Evolution is Incompatible with the Teachings of the Old Testament" by Currid. The question is raised, "why does Genesis 1–3 contain so many elements that appear to be literal history if in fact it was borrowing from an ancient Near-Eastern myth?" (851). One might note in response that (a) not all evolutionary creationists (or general Old Testament scholars who aren't creationists, for that matter) argue for literary dependence between Genesis and other creation accounts (one way or another), and (b) "history" is not necessarily binary, as all kinds of literature contain "historical" elements without being "history" or "historical narrative." In fact, Gen 1–3 (or even 1–11) is probably best thought of as "historical fiction" or "parabolic history."[66] None of the authors of *Theistic Evolution* appear aware of this category (whether for Genesis or other books, like Job, Jonah, etc.) even when surveying the options,[67] but insist on "historical narrative" as the only legitimate option.

Currid also argues that if Gen 1 is "polemical" (or anti-"mythical"), it must be historical because it wouldn't be a polemic without being historical (853–56). But this simply isn't the case. A polemical interpretation isn't necessarily

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Evangelicals (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007); *idem, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011); *idem., Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012); James Dunn, *The Living Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); *idem., The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (New York: HarperOne, 2014); Christopher Hays and Christopher Ansberry, eds., *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012); Kenton Sparks, *Sacred Word, Broken Word* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); *idem., God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Thom Stark, *The Human Faces of God: What Scripture Reveals When It Gets God Wrong (And Why Inerrancy Tries to Hide It* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011). Cf. Ben Witherington, *The Living Word: Rethinking the Theology of the Bible* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009). For an excellent introduction to bibliology, see John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Toronto: Clements, 2004), and an excellent introduction to the Bible, see Andrew Arterbury, W. H. Bellinger, Derek Dodson, *Engaging the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014) and Michael Gorman, ed., *Scripture and Its Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

66 See John Goldingay, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 70–71: "Genesis 1 is history in that it speaks of real people and events (God, creating, orderliness, goodness, expectations not met, God's design not being realized), but it does so in pictures. It speaks of God's historical intention and God's historical act of creation, but its story takes parabolic form. . . . You cannot ask, for instance, where Cain got his wife from; to do so is to treat the parable as the kind of allegory in which every detail has something corresponding to it in the literal events that the parable represents. If Genesis 1–11 is parabolic, when does the Torah make a transition from parabolic history to literal history?" For a thoughtful answer to this question and other related ones, see John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 859–83.

67 E.g., "poetry and allegory," "figurative literature," "literary," (856–58). While somewhat "poetic," it is an overstatement to simply assert that Gen 1 is "poetry" (especially given the comparative poetic literature the other Hebrew scriptures furnish). Cf. Kyle Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 106.

anti-"mythical," but anti-*pagan*. It is quite possible the authors/scribes responsible for our current Genesis text weren't concerned about bashing the ahistoricity of "myth," but were concerned about what the competing creation accounts otherwise implied. In fact, Currid's argument brings the genre and literary-types of Genesis and the competing narratives *closer* together instead of further apart, for it is a shared literary form and subject matter that would allow Gen 1 to function as such a decisive refutation. In doing polemics, an author does not need to refute poetry with song or wisdom literature with lament, or respond to apocalyptic literature with an epistle, or (in this case) mythology with a historical account. In the same way, it would make more sense for the scribes to critique competing mythologies of creation (which may or may not have historical elements)[68] with a creation account of the *same* literary genre, not a different one. A successful polemic *might* be contingent on the historicity of the story, or it might not be.

It is also argued that "repetitive formulas do not necessarily signify nonhistorical, figurative accounts" (860). This is true. However, these formulas do signify *something*, namely a literary feature; scribes were consciously aware of arranging material into a pattern for reasons that may have very little to do with history or chronological sequence.[69] In the end, when Currid says, "Genesis 1 has an elevated style, yet it is still historical narrative" (861), it would have been much more accurate to say, "Genesis 1 has highly elevated literary features, so the burden of proof is on the one who insists that it is 'ordinary historical narrative,' though it may turn out to have historical elements."

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68 Currid denies this, saying "non-Israelite accounts are legendary stories that have no determinable basis in fact or history. They are . . . simply ahistorical" (861). But this need not be the case, and, in fact, some historical element would seem a deductive corollary in Currid's view given what the creation accounts have in common—such as particular similarities (there are over two dozen specific similarities between the *Atrahasis Epic* and Gen 1–9 alone) and particular differences of the same subject matter (e.g., *Enuma Elish* vs. Gen 2–9).

One must also be reminded about the contemporary (600–500s BCE) literary example of the Homeric poems. No scholar until the late 1800s believed the city of Troy or Mycenae in Homer were historical. But one Englishman (Frank Calvert) believed Troy was real and proved it when Heinrich Schliemann dug it up in the 1870s (followed by Mycenae). For these reasons and others, one should at least be open to the *possibility* of a historic Adam and Eve, an ancient place on the globe called "Eden," etc., though this may not ultimately prove to be the case.

69 For an excellent introduction to how the Old Testament was written, see Karel Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), in conjunction with Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History,* trans. Linda Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). Note, however, that it is easy to swing too far in the opposite direction, as in Denis Lamoureux, *Evolutionary Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), who argues that the various patterns and literary features of Genesis indicate that it is "contrived" and therefore not "real" (this is false dichotomy, of course). For example, he says "the ages and time periods in this genealogy [Gen 5] are contrived, not actual" (213); "Obviously, the temporal referents in Gen 11 are contrived and artificial" (236); "the origin of the chosen line in Scripture is contrived and not literally or historically accurate" (238), etc. This would be like saying that because a history book organizes the American Civil War into a narrative of ten chapters about five families over five generations (clearly contrived), we can't even be sure the Civil War "literally" happened. This is absurd.

Currid's arguments for harmonizing the two creation accounts in Gen 1–2 appears highly contingent on Hebrew grammar (most creationist arguments—whether from Young-Earth or Old-Earth perspectives—tend to be as well).[70] But it must be remembered that Jesus and the early church probably used the Greek Septuagint, not the Hebrew Bible.[71] This may or may not affect particular points, but the fact that a *translation* served as "the word of God" for Jesus, the apostles, and the church for many generations should give pause before hanging entire arguments on Hebrew grammar and word studies of a particular text form.

In a similar line, it is argued that the *toledoth* in Genesis "is disjunctive, indicating that a new topic is being addressed" (870). But this would seem to work *against*, not in favor, of Currid's argument that the second creation account (in Gen 2) is a logical continuation and expansion of the first.

Finally, in a sweeping dismissal of Enns' *The Evolution of Adam*,[72] Currid states, "The assumption that all of Israel's history until the exile occurred prior to the composition of Genesis 2–3, and that the description of human origins is merely a reflective echo, is exactly that . . . merely an assumption" (875). This is simply untrue. Scholars date Genesis (at least as a general literary composition, and not necessarily all of its source material) to the 500s–400s BCE for reasons that have nothing to do with theories of evolution or mere "assumptions." It has to do with an apparent literary unity of Genesis/Deuteronomy through 2 Kings,[73] references in this material (including Pentateuch) to historical events/places/characters/terminology that are situated in the 700s–500s (as opposed to strictly

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70 Consider, for example, the decades of useless lexical research regarding the Hebrew term "day" (יוֹם).

71 Introductions to the Bible often note this. But in particular, see Timothy Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

72 Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012).

73 The "Deuteronomistic History" perspective largely originates with Martin Noth (1902–1968), though Schmid more recently in *Old Testament,* 118–20, gives excellent arguments in favor of an Exodus 2–2 Kings literary unit. Cf. Thomas Dozeman, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid, *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch?: Identifying Literary Works in Genesis Through Kings* (Society of Biblical Literature. Ancient Israel and Its Liter) (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). So persuasive is the literary unity of the Pentateuch with the "Former Prophets" that the seminal work by Jan Gertz. et. al, *The formation of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) features a section on it ("Do the Pentateuchal Sources Extend into the Former Prophets?"). In brief, my own view is that Genesis–2 Kings is a single literary unit composed by scribes in the 500s–560s BCE, using a variety of (already) written and oral sources (that may or may not go back to Moses himself; arguments for this ancient connection, like those of Richard Hess, should be considered) of new composition, revision, and direct quotation, but of primarily a southern and northern tradition of Israel's history. If this is the case, however, Gen 1–3 would serve a rather excellent introduction to the entire unit, since it is the story of Israel condensed into a single, vivid, parabolic form . In other words, in this view, Gen 1–3 is, as an introduction to the rest of what follows, the theatrical, parabolic microcosm of the history of Israel (Genesis 4–2 Kings) culminating in final exile. Whether there is any literal historicity to the specific persons or events is irrelevant in this case (though if there was, would be fascinating).

the second millennium BCE), and other evidences of an exilic or post-exilic date. In short, this conclusion about Gen 1–3 is drawn from source, redaction, and literary criticism (standard introductions to the Old Testament and good study Bibles point this out—basic sources and ideas that, again, do not appear anywhere in *Theistic Evolution*).[74] Currid, like the rest of the contributors, does not engage the arguments of Enns' 2012 *The Evolution of Adam* or any similar literature that actually discusses the author, occasion, date, literary origins and history, and audience of Genesis.

The next two chapters (28–29 on New Testament and historical theology) are very similar to the approach and quality of Grudem's chapter. In chapter 28, Waters goes through all the NT texts that mentions Adam and argues that they must be historical and literal—regardless if this conclusion is logically entailed, exegetically sustained, or supported by other means. It is inconceivable for Waters that Paul could appeal to contemporary ideas and characters to communicate effectively.[75] Today, we might talk about going home to "the Shire" (a literary fiction used to describe a quaint home town, drawn from *The Lord of the Rings*) or about a person who is a "Scrooge" (a fictitious, literary character used to describe a living, breathing miser in our family, drawn from *A Christmas Carol*). Waters argues that this is simply impossible. No NT author can utilize a generally accepted literary phenomenon, event, character, or idea in reference to something "real." The whole chapter is plagued by this fundamental error. Other problems include the same type of error applied to typology, a very narrow understanding of sin (924–25), and citation of commentaries that do not actually align with Waters' own literalist conclusions.

Allison's chapter fares no better in a true case of pseudo-scholarship. A paltry four sources are cited to conclude that "most" of "early Christians interpreted Genesis 1 literally" (931). On pages 945–46, a select group of recent, denominational confessions are quoted in two pages to draw the remarkable conclusion: "*theistic evolution is incompatible with all the historical doctrinal standards that*

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74 E.g., Michael Coogan and Cynthia Chapman, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures,* 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); David Carr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2010); Christine Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Andrew Hill and John Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009); Harrelson, Walter, ed. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible.* Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); Green, Joel, ed. *The CEB Study Bible* (Common English Bible, 2013).

75 Consider the whole host of second-temple Jewish ideas that was the worldview of the New Testament (e.g., the legendary "rock that followed them" in 1 Cor 10:4, etc.). Cf. Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Philip Esler, *The Early Christian World,* Routledge Worlds vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2017); the first three volumes in the "Christian Origins and the Question of God" series by N. T. Wright (Minneapolis: Fortress Press). This is not even to mention Greek thought implemented by early Christians.

address these specific questions [creation, providence, Adam and Eve, sin, the fall]" (946; emphasis original). The fact that Allison shows no awareness of the hundreds of creeds and confessions throughout church history[76]—and excludes a number of documents and doctrinal statements that *do* address several of these matters[77]—makes this conclusion all the more incredulous.

It also does not seem to make much difference for the chapter's arguments how limited the relevance to pre-Darwinian doctrinal statements would be. While not wholly anachronistic, there are severe limitations to drawing such conclusions on "incompatibility" (i.e., "these theological documents go against 19th and 20th century theories of biological origins"), especially since it is impossible to know how exactly pre-Darwinian theologians would have received ideas like universal common descent and biological evolution. Similar obstacles apply to even recent documents, which are not necessarily aimed at addressing evolution even if they mention creation, Adam and Eve, sin, etc.

Critique Area #3: Uncritical Adoption of Modernist Philosophy

A third—and the most important—area of concern is how *Theistic Evolution* rests on an uncritical adoption of modernist ideas.

Before exploring these, it should be mentioned that there are many elements in the book that are explicitly condemnatory of modern thought. Most of these were already documented above (e.g., the problem of scientism, power plays behind scientific research, non-neutrality of peer-review, anti-religious sentiments in academia, etc.). However, the more foundational elements of modernism appear intact. In fact, it seems the primary reason there exists any critique of modern ideas is to *make room for ID-creationism*, not because there is necessarily a problem with these ideas themselves (i.e., a larger problem with the Enlightenment project in general).

First of all, the epistemological framework behind *Theistic Evolution* is (realist) foundationalism.[78] This philosophy, largely credited to Descartes and most recently projected into Christian theology through the work of Alvin Plantinga, sees truth-building as a linear series of facts and propositions that extend from

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76 See Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition,* 4 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Cf. John Leith, *Creeds of the Churches,* 3rd ed. (Louisville: WJK, 1982).

77 E.g., "The Confession of 1967" (PCUSA), "A Brief Statement of Faith" (PCUSA), "New Hampshire Confession" (1833, Baptist), "Abstract Principles of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" (1858), Augsburg Confession of Faith (1530, Lutheran), Second Helvetic Confession (1562), Helvetic Consensus Formula (1675), the Thirty-Nine Articles (1801, Anglican), "Articles of Religion" (1784, Methodist), "Statement of Faith" (1959, UCC), etc.

78 Note that one of the books' editors, J. P. Moreland, recently authored a pro-foundationalist volume entitled *Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

universal, unquestionable principles (the "foundation"). "Truth" is more or less "correspondence" with "reality" (knowledge being "true belief"), and for the Christian, biblical revelation stands at the very bottom of all truth and knowledge.[79] It is difficult to quote specific examples at this point, though some essays bring out these ideas stronger than others (e.g., Moreland's and Grudem's chapters). It is also not possible to summarize problems with realist foundationalism. Fortunately, many others have already done so.[80]

Extending from this epistemology, contributors of the book also rely on a simple, representational view of language. Certain forms of language are privileged, which terminates in propositionalism. As if the 20th century linguistic turn had never happened, language is generally viewed as a passive, neutral medium by which to communicate truths, facts, and realities. Language is not a filter, much less a worldview in and of itself, but rather a "tool" in the hands of knowers.[81] Naturally, literal, measurable, and numerical language forms are privileged above all others (e.g., metaphorical, figurative, analogical). In this view, to have quantified an experience is to have truly understood it, and to have identified the cause of an event (especially physical cause), is to have understood the event.[82] Thus, the "natural sciences" have a functional monopoly on truth while the "soft sciences" should attempt to approximate the certainties of these "hard" sciences as much as possible.[83] Discourse tends to reduce down to information, propositions,

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79 There are Christian foundationalist variants that would put something other than the Bible at the "bottom" of all truth (e.g., Christ-event; inner work of Holy Spirit, etc.). In any case, Plantinga argued that belief in God is "properly basic" (i.e., foundational and not needing further justification).

80 From a distinctly Christian perspective, see Stanley Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Post-Modern Context* (Louisville: WJK, 2001); Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Post-Modernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); John Franke, *Manifold Witness: The Plurality of Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009); Timothy Phillips and Dennis Okholm, eds. *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), Part IV; Kevin Vanhoozer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Post Modern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Part I; Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine.*

81 Occasionally, the contributors in *Theistic Evolution* give attention to rhetoric and how language is used in a social context—but only in criticism of theistic evolution, and not with reference to themselves.

82 Note the perceptive challenge of Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life* (Louisville: WJK, 2015), 185: "The modern world began with the rise of the exact sciences. The sciences became exact through the 'reduction of science to mathematics' (*reduction scientiae ad mathematicum*). The concern that guided perception was freedom from natural forces that were not understood, and the mastery over them. For Descartes, it was the concern to make the human being 'the lord and possessor of nature'; for the devout Francis Bacon it was the restoration of the likeness to God by way of lordship over the earth (*dominium terrae*). How can power over nature be acquired through knowledge? Through the application of the old Roman method, *divide et impera*—'divide and rule.' If natural formations are split up into their individual parts, and one perceives how they are put together and function, they can be 'dominated,' and a separate formation can be constructed from their individual parts. But has one thereby perceived the truth of nature, or merely overpowered it because it was weaker?"

83 Hence the popular but terribly biased phrase, "It's not a pure science but. . . ." (as if there was such thing as a "pure science.") Two vivid, contemporary examples of this aggressive empiricism are (a) the "evidence-based" movement in therapy and counseling (i.e., medicine and psychiatry

and assertion; some genres (e.g., the didactic, historical narrative) are given prior-ity over others (parable, poetry, etc.).[84] Metaphor, analogy, and the literary are viewed as important, but nevertheless inferior "carriers of truth." All of this is encased in an attitude of confidence, certainty, and absolutism.

In the context of Christian theology, this amounts to religious fundamental-ism.[85] The above features manifest themselves in propositionalist theology, bibli-cism, a conflation of one's reading of the Bible with "reality," an attitude of scorn towards non-literal readings of the Bible (because less *literal* is supposedly less *truthful*), and an elevation of modern methods of knowledge (e.g., empiricism). This is precisely what one finds in *Theistic Evolution* in almost every chapter.[86]

As a case in point, "theology" is defined by Dilley as "propositions about any supernatural being" (599). This is a strictly modern definition of theology and

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overtaking the practice of counseling, the invention of the DSM, etc.) and (b) neoclassical econom-ics. Narrative therapy has largely arisen in response to the former, and heterodox and Austrian economics (with its focus on "praxeology") in response to the latter.

84 Or, as Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 5, puts it, "biblical propositionalism would seem to presuppose the quintessentially modern form of epistemology, namely, foundationalism." He later notes (293), "foundationalism privileges a certain type of information—propositional truths abstracted from Scripture—to the detriment of the diverse literary genres in and through which that information is canonically processed. Second, foundationalism privileges a certain type of procedure for generating knowledge that abstracts the knower from the process as well. For all intents and purposes, the particulars—the particular kinds of texts, the particular location and identity of the exegete—play no significant role in the getting of knowledge."

85 Sathianathan Clarke, *Competing Religious Fundamentalisms* (Louisville: WJK, 2017), 154, pro-vides a definition for Islam, Hindu, and Christian fundamentalism: "Religious fundamentalism is a communal mind-set [separatism, in/out dynamics] steeped in a revealed Word-vision [bibli-cism, literal interpretation], corroborated by a definitive ethical system of world-ways for human living, and calibrated by an aggressive that labors toward the goal that such a global order will govern the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious lives of all human beings." Cf. Josie McSkimming, *Leaving Christian Fundamentalism and the Reconstruction of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 16: "fundamentalism refers to a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the bor-ders of the religious community and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors" George Mardsen, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1, tries to put it in a single sentence: "A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something." His classic work on this subject is *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* which sees the creation-evolution debate and literal Bible interpretation as an essential feature of evangelical fundamentalism. However, the most decisive critiques of evangelical fundamentalism come from James Barr. Other than his three volumes on this subject, see John Barton, ed., *The Collected Essays of James Barr* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2. I mention all of this because (a) some critics of evolutionary creation "play dumb" on the entire subject (e.g., Richards, *God and Evolution,* 51), and (b) some recent scholars question the cross-religious existence of religious fundamentalism (e.g., David Harrington Watt, *Antifundamentalism in Modern America* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2017).

86 This approach is also, in part, common in some works by evolutionary creationists, such as Lamoureux's *Evolutionary Creation*. There, instead of the modern fundamentalist biblicist approach (i.e., Bible is storehouse of facts), Lamoureux takes the flip side—a "spiritual truth" perspective, where "the primary purpose of the Book of God's Words is to deliver spiritual Truth" (15, cf. 19, 32, 50–51, 110, 146–47, 157, 161, 172, 173, 184, 258, 292, 475). This is also true with confident claims about "reality." The "reality" column on p. 242 of *Evolutionary Creation* is vivid example.

uncritically stated. It is so particular, in fact, that it can be found almost nowhere else.[87] It is also problematic for many reasons.[88] "The main defect of propositionalism," notes Vanhoozer, "is that it reduces the variety of speech actions in the canon to one type: the assertion. This results in a monologic conception of theology, and of truth."[89] Thus, in Christian theology, the Bible is reduced down to "a storehouse of facts," to use Hodge's notorious analogy.[90] Moreland embodies this approach, partly in his claim (for example) that the problem with theistic

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87 Perhaps that is why no one is cited with reference to it. In any case, one should compare and contrast this grotesque definition of theology with those of actual theologians and works of theology—especially exceptional works, such as Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 1–8; *idem., Renewing the Center* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 211, 214; John Franke, *The Character of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 31, 44, 166; McGrath, *Christian Theology,* 86; Michael Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 30; Philip Clayton, *Transforming Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 2; Dorothy Soelle, *Thinking About God* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016); Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: WJK, 2005), 265; Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 32; William Placher, ed., *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: WJK, 2003), 1, 32; Paul Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 8; George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville: WJK, 2009, repr.), 99; Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis; Fortress, 1977), 72–74; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatic,* ed. John Bolt, Trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 3–13; Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), xi–xix; Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 1–2; Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 169–211; Richard Plantinga, Thomas Thompson, and Matthew Lundberg, *An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–6; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, introduction by Helmut Gollwitzer (New York: T&T Clark, 1961), 1–4; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 3–4; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2000), 121. Contrast these definitions with those of inferior (i.e., uncritical) fundamentalist works, whether in Reformed works such as Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), xxv; R. C. Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian* (Reformation Trust Publishing, 2014), 11–12, 25; Robert Culver, *Systematic Theology* (Fearn: Mentor, 2005), 29; John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 76; or in American evangelical works, such as Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 23; Bruce Riley Ashford and Keith Whitfield, "Theological Method" in *A Theology for the Church,* ed. Daniel Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014); Charles Swindoll and Roy Zuck, eds., *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003); Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 8; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 21.

88 See Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine,* 256–93.

89 Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 266.

90 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999, orig. 1865), § 5: "The Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science. It is his storehouse of facts; and his method of ascertaining what the Bible teaches is the same as that which the natural philosopher adopts to ascertain what nature teaches." D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 72, argues that "Probably too much is being made of this sentence," because it doesn't take into consideration Hodge's full method and the context of this quote (which is "not bibliology"). But Carson misses the point: the fact that Hodge is comfortable drawing this analogy at all, without qualification, *does* say something about his "bibliology" whether he is meaning to or not.

evolution is that "the Bible is no longer regarded by many as a genuine source of knowledge" (633).

However, given that most of the Bible does not come to us in the literal, the propositional, or the factual but rather in the narratival and metaphorical,[91] this perspective (ironically) wreaks havoc on any kind of theology that tries to be based on the Bible.[92] One assumes that the goal of reading the Bible is simply to gather true information. So, when the genre of a text (e.g., Gen 1–3) clearly is not meant to transmit raw information (e.g., a "report of events"), one is forced to read it that way, even if the results are absurd or in plain conflict with other sources of information. This invisible chaos lurking underneath *Theistic Evolution* is evident in the constant use of the phrase "Bible teachings" or "the Bible teaches."[93] Again: *most of the Bible does not exist in didactic form, nor are the "teachings" the most valuable or even the most important aspect of what the Bible does for the Christian and for the world.*[94] Rather, the scriptures are an organic whole and must be treated as such.

> What we can say . . . is that it was not until the modern period (and really, not until the late modern period) that a significant minority of believers became convinced that the truth of their faith depended upon an absolutely literal—an absolutely "factual"—interpretation of scripture, and felt compelled to stake everything on so ludicrous a wager. Now the Bible came to be seen as what it obviously is not: a collection of 'inerrant' oracles and historical reports, each true in the same way as every other, each subject to only one level of

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91 Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 70; Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980); Janet Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (New York: Clarendon, 1987); Paul Chilton and Monika Kopytowska, eds., *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Erin Kidd and Jakob Karl Rinderknecht, eds., *Putting God on the Map: Theology and Conceptual Mapping* (Landham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018). Cf. E. Janet Warren, *Cleansing the Cosmos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), ch. 2.

92 In trying to navigate between fundamentalism and the post-modern approach of Grenz and Franke, Vanhoozer argues: "Scripture is neither a textbook of propositional truths that serves as the foundation for knowledge nor a narrative that relies on its position in the church's web of belief for its meaning and truth. Scripture is rather a canonical atlas: a collection of maps that variously render the way, the truth, and the life . . . A map is an interpretative framework, not a foundation of basic facts. The proof: there is no such thing as a universal, all-purpose map. . . . Unlike a building, a map has no foundation. A map is an imagined whole [and yet] . . . a certain textual fixedness. A map is an interpretative framework that seeks to represent objective reality but does so only thanks to subjective selections. This is what makes the map such an apt metaphor for a postfoundationalist rationality that strives to hold on to the ideal of objective truth while acknowledging the provisional and perspectival nature of human subjectivity" (*The Drama of Doctrine*, 294, 296, 297).

93 This privileging of the didactic is explicit in *Theistic Evolution* not only in the reoccurring phrases, but in titles and subtitles regarding the Bible's "teachings."

94 See N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (New York: HarperOne, 2013); Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*; Gorman, *Scripture and Its Interpretation.* One should also remember that books don't "say" or "teach" anything, *persons* do.

interpretation, and all perfectly in agreement with one another. As I say, this was largely the result of a cultural impoverishment, but it also followed from the triumph of a distinctly modern concept of what constitutes reliable knowledge; it was the strange misapplication of the rigorous but quite limited methods of the modern empirical sciences to questions properly belonging to the realms of logic and of spiritual experience.[95]

Other aspects of propositionalist biblicism have already been examined above (inerrantism; equating one's interpretation of the Bible with reality; a forceful, literalist interpretation of biblical texts, etc.).[96] In *Theistic Evolution,* those who disagree with the authors simply aren't permitting the Bible "to speak for itself" (926).

Three other particular features of modern thought emerge as one reads *Theistic Evolution*: (1) a triumphalist tone of certainty and absolute truth; (2) the elevation of empiricism and its encroachment on theology; (3) dualisms, dualisms, and more dualisms.

Triumphalist Tone
Theistic Evolution exhibits a forceful, optimistic, and triumphalist tone of certainty and absolutism. This is despite inherent limitations of current human knowledge, others' genuine search for truth, and a recognition that other committed Christians respectfully disagree.

Axe establishes the book's cadence by observing that "Jesus called his followers to surrender their lives, their pride, their earthly security and, at times, their possessions—right down to the shirts on their backs. He never, however, called them to surrender to the truth" (103, cf. 94). Similarly, "As theists, we have the one true explanation for this world we inhabit . . . it is *the* explanation" (104).

In a different article, Tour mocks how scientists have tried to create life:

> [T]he world's best synthetic chemists, biochemists, and evolutionary biologists have combined forces to form a team—a dream team . . . Money is no object. They have at their disposal the most advanced analytical facilities, the complete scientific literature, a synthetic and natural coupling agents, and all the reagents their hearts could desire. (190)

And with poor results, Tour concludes: "Take your time, folks, take a few billion years. Nothing? Well, well, well" (190).

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95 Hart, *The Experience of God,* 27
96 For more examples of simplistic biblicism, see 642, 706, 710, 722, 926.

Chapter 11 by Casey Luskin is "Comprehensive Critique" of universal common decent (UCD). UCD has been a scientific consensus for over a half-century. One would expect a "comprehensive critique" of UCD to take the form of perhaps a series of volumes by different biologists and paleontologists. But, here, a single, forty-page article is viewed worthy of the title.[97] Luskin offers pious wisdom to his readers, nevertheless, that "the pursuit of truth is of the utmost importance."

Likewise, Meyer and Nelson stress, "we recall that the goal of science is *truth*" (559; emphasis original) and "The search for truth should override any custom or convention" (567). Moreland triumphantly claims that "beyond a reasonable doubt . . . ID theory is far more reasonable than theistic evolution" (559). With the truth so obvious, the pressure is on for anyone studying this subject: "theistic evolutionists must make their choice . . . what matters, in short, is which [theory] is *true*" (631). As it is evident by now, the authors of *Theistic Evolution* do not see it as a possibility that one's search for truth could lead to a different conclusion than their own.

They later argue that "[For God-of-gaps arguments] to have force, theistic evolutionists must show that we have genuine gaps in our knowledge of materialistic causes of the origin of new forms of life—i.e., that we have grounds for thinking that present 'gaps' will ultimately be filled with knowledge of any actual natural process or mechanism capable of biological innovation" (590). In other words, the burden of proof is placed not on the person claiming to have knowledge about the origin of life (ID theorists), but on the one claiming a *lack* of knowledge.[98] This demonstrates at least some degree of epistemological arrogance (especially given the notoriously challenging subject matter—the origin of life itself!).

Many such myopic demands and black-and-white claims of triumphant finality are coupled with credentialing reminders, warfare/fortress mentalities, and repulsion at the idea that theology might change. "Theistic evolution is intellectual pacifism that lulls people to sleep while the barbarians are at the gates" (645) Moreland declares. He goes on to make clear just who the cowards and the heroes are:

> When science appears to conflict with Scripture, we shouldn't
> immediately lay our intellectual arms down and wait for scientists

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97 After all, it was already declared in the volume that "the case for UCD rests in part upon factual claims that have evaporated" (Meyer, 361).

98 Note also Meyer's claim to know the limits of "self-organization" on 232–34 and 270–71. It would seem obvious that something as recently studied as self-organization and emergence has plenty of time to mature and develop, and that no human being today truly knows the boundaries of such phenomena any more than one can say, "we've mastered physics" (especially with artificial intelligence on the horizon). Perhaps contemporary evolutionary biologists' confidence in claiming to know the abilities of natural selection and genetic mutation has given ID theorists a similar license to make such unrealistic claims of knowledge.

> to tell us what we can allow the Bible to say and how we need to revise Scripture. No, we should be patient, acknowledge the problem, and press into service Christian intellectuals who are highly qualified academically, who have respect for the fact that Scripture presents us with knowledge, not just truth to be accepted by blind faith . . . The ID movement is such a set of intellectuals. (647)

Indeed, ID proponents aren't "tucking their tails between their legs at the first sign of conflict between the Bible and science" (647). Instead, they represent "a very vibrant, intellectually sophisticated interdisciplinary intelligent design movement" (650). This formidable force offers a stable alternative to a changing world and changing views:

> [T]his sort of revisionism—changing biblical interpretations that have held steady for two thousand years at just the time when there is politically correct pressure to do so, especially when that pressure comes from science—gives off the message that biblical teaching is pretty tentative . . . . If the church has been mistaken about one of the central teachings for two thousand years, why should we trust the church regarding its teachings about extramarital sex, homosexuality, or the role of women in the church? (642, 648)

Like change, uncertainties are also viewed with serious suspicion. Reeves criticizes evolutionary creationists for not believing that the Bible is clear (717) on some matters, and mocks Walton simply for appealing to a New Testament scholar (N. T. Wright) in order to assist him in interpreting the New Testament (719).[99] "We now have a Bible that has lost its authority," Reeves concludes, "is market by obscurity rather than clarity, and is certainly insufficient for a true understanding of the world" (729). Since Reeves makes all of these claims in the context of an explicitly "Reformed" theology (712, 717), one is tempted to point out that this argument was largely used *against* the Reformers—who by their translating of the Bible and alternative interpretations threatened what Rome believed was a stable foundation of "clarity," "authority," and true understanding of the world.

At any rate, the most off-putting aspect of *Theistic Evolution's* tone are the

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99 This jab is particularly distasteful since it perversely utilizes another Christian scholar's humility as evidence of (alleged) biblical criticism. This is by no means the only example where embodied acknowledgement of human limitation is twisted by a religious fundamentalist into proof that opposing viewpoints favor an imaginary anti-Christian agnosticism. This subject, with relation to some of Grudem's claims, was the particular focus of a subsection in Jamin Hübner, "Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59/1 (2016): 99–117. For more on this epistemic humility issue and the "incomprehensibility of God," see "Divine Action" and the large quote of Kaufman below.

regular taunts and jabs directed toward the audience. Many of the book's chapters end with high-pressure questions about entertaining evolutionary creation as a possibility. The incriminating implications of evolutionary creationists are obvious:

> [W]hy would any Christian want to flirt with theistic evolution? . . . why would a believer want to embrace something that undermines the plausibility of Christianity?" (Moreland, 650–51)

> [D]o Christians today really want to accept a theory that decrees that God is not allowed to speak to us about these vast areas of human knowledge? (Grudem, 823–24)

> We [Christians] have the one true explanation for the world . . . why would we choose to deprive people of this? (Axe, 104)

> Surely someone is willing to scale the wall [of the extended evolutionary synthesis] to see what might lie on the other side. And why, specifically, should theistic evolutionists—who already presumably believe there is something on the other side of the wall—remain behind it? (Meyer, Nelson, Gauger, 287)

> With the fossil evidence for human evolution so weak, why should our theistic evolutionist brothers and sisters insist that the church must adopt their viewpoint? (Luskin, 473)

Elevation of Empiricism

The authors of *Theistic Evolution* demonstrate their commitment to modern empiricism in many ways. The reductionistic focus on the DNA argument for ID is obvious enough (e.g., 261). But there are more subtle manifestations. One example from Meyer will have to suffice for the purposes of this article:

> Others like to think of God as more actively involved in the process of creation. They find it appealing to think of God's activity like a great composer who first establishes a theme at the beginning of his work and then adds new variations to that original theme at episodic intervals thereafter. As a Christian, however, I affirm that God acted entirely freely, and was under no compulsion to act in a way that either appeals to or affirms our aesthetic sensibilities. So I think the question of when God acted should remain a matter for empirical investigation and should not be determined by our aesthetic or theological preferences altogether. (222)

There are a host of problems with this paragraph.[100] It is also perhaps the most remarkable quote in the entire book for one simple reason: it is asserted that divine action should be primarily determined by "empirical investigation."[101]

The kinds of problems that this radically modern and reductionist approach create should be obvious—especially in the context of the church. Imagine that a wayward brother in the faith finally leaves his alcohol addiction and shows up to church Sunday morning—and continues partaking in the community as a committed follower of Jesus. The church family had been praying for him for months, against the all odds that he would ever return sober. So they praise God that prayers have been answered and that God has acted. But, if Meyer's thesis is taken seriously, this is a mistake, because this kind of thinking needs to be corrected by some sort of "empirical investigation," for only in that case can we *really know* that God has acted.

This perspective also creates problems within the biblical narrative. It's the time of the judges, and some Israelites under the leadership of Deborah are facing various temptations. To encourage them, the elders retell the Exodus story, how God saved their ancestors from slavery by mighty acts (i.e., the plagues) and that this God is still working today. But, just then, an ID advocate from the future arrives on the scene to let them know that whether God has actually acted or not in the Exodus is a matter for empirical investigation. The Israelites look at each other, baffled. The Exodus events can't be recreated. They happened years ago, might *possibly* have left *some* archeological remains, but now primarily exist in the memories of the community and in the lives that they live in response to those historic events. This has been sufficient for them, so why should it be insufficient now? In a strange twist, Meyer seems to see the pseudo-positivist attitude of doubting Thomas (i.e., "I need immediate, empirical proof to believe") as exemplary.

Such privileging of the empirical, if applied consistently, would mean the death of religion and theology itself—along with most of the humanities and large chunks of the social sciences. Yes, the applications of empirical investigation and other methods of the natural sciences may have real import and significance for other areas and kinds of knowledge. But to cage entire swaths of human experience and monopolize the very knowability of God's presence itself to those wearing lab coats is truly a grotesque form of scientism. As one theologian observed:

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100 It is about as baffling as Francis Collins' claim in *The Language of God* (New York: Free, 2006), 52, that "The only thing that will kill the possibility of miracles more quickly than a committed materialist is the claiming of miracle status for everyday events for which natural explanations are readily at hand." See the next section for more on the meaning of "miracles."

101 Contrast this basic idea, for example, with the short (and perhaps overstating) comment of Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:222: "Science can supply defeaters about silly claims about a six-day creation; it cannot and does not tell us what God has done."

> [B]oth atheistic critics of ID and proponents of ID often argue as if there can be no rational belief in the createdness of nature if science does not give us ground for such a belief. . . . It is in its critique of theistic evolutionism that I believe ID comes closest to succumbing to temptation of scientism.[102]

Indeed. ID's (possibly legitimate) argument that God's action *may* be "empirically detectable" has morphed into the (problematic) argument that God's action *must* be "empirically detectable."[103]

Another major problem with Meyer's argument is that it contradicts other ID arguments. This was already observed above: aesthetics *is* an indicator of "when God acted," at least in the (an?) ID model. Where is the complaint about Wiker and Witt's arguments, which demonstrate just how much science and knowledge of God is specifically aligned with our "aesthetic sensibilities"? Did God *have* to act in this way? It is not clear why evolutionary creationists are more guilty than Wiker, Witt, and other ID proponents when suggesting discernible, aesthetic patterns in God's creation. Point: aesthetics has frequently been an indicator (and even a form) of truth.

Third, one wonders what fitting metaphor would substitute for a symphony regarding creation (whether according to Gen 1–3 or any scientific model), since it is viewed as either invalid or inferior.[104] Perhaps analogy and metaphor are not appropriate at all in describing God and creation against the (evidently) superior language form of the literal and measurable. This again, would essentially mean the end of theology if maintained consistently.

Fourth and finally, one should not miss Meyer's qualifier "as a Christian." All of his claims are framed in such a way as to identify them as exclusively Christian. But, as we have seen, there is little that is distinctly Christian about Meyer's

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102 Erkki Vesa Rope Kojonen, *The Intelligent Design Debate and the Temptation of Scientism* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6, 8. The underlying problem, he argues in his earlier dissertation, is that "the ID theorists do not adequately respond to the arguments for separating between Darwinian evolutionary biology as a scientific discipline and Darwinism as a worldview. Here the views of the ID theorists even come close to scientism, because they argue that theistic evolutionism should differ from the Darwinian worldview on the level of science, before it can differ in any meaningful way" (Kojonen, "Intelligent Design," 298).

103 Cf. Hart, *The Experience of God,* 72, in his description of modern science: "what began as a principled refusal of metaphysical speculation, for the sake of specific empirical inquiries, has now been mistaken for a comprehensive knowledge of the metaphysical shape of reality; the art of humble questioning has been mistaken for the sure possession of ultimate conclusions." Hence, Christian perspectives that differ with Meyer can be little more than "a re-affirmation of some materialistic version of evolutionary theory restated using theological terminology" (Meyer, 48). Without adherence to a modern understanding of miracles and divine interventions, so the argument goes, one cannot even legitimately talk of God's action or deep involvement.

104 Or, what would ID look like *within* the musical metaphor? (Perhaps a big intro followed by silence, until the earth-shaking gong of genetic information injection, followed by more silence until the Exodus . . . .)

theological perspective—whether with respect to God's freedom (though not "free" to create through evolution?) or otherwise. In actuality, the suggestion that God's action is best or primarily known through empiricism is rather *novel* in the larger picture of Christian thought.

Superficial Dualisms and Dichotomies

One of the most characteristic features of modern thought are dualisms and dichotomies. Prominent examples include the "natural" vs. "supernatural" realms, Cartesian dualism (body-soul anthropology), "material" vs. "immaterial" phenomena, "fact" vs. "values," and of course, "science vs. religion." Modern thinking is not restricted to a particular set of dualisms but exhibits a wide-range of dualistic thinking in general.

The table below identifies a handful of the explicit dualisms, dichotomies,[105] and contrasts found in *Theistic Evolution,*[106] revealing the prominence of this feature:

Dualism/Dichotomy	Reference
"confrontational view" / "non-confrontational view"	Axe, 92
"natural selection" / "God"	Axe, 100
"natural selection" / "intelligent design"	Maftti, 163
"material processes" / "intelligent design"	Meyer, 228ff.
"laws of nature" and "natural laws" / "intelligent design"	Meyer, 225–28
"intrinsic MN" / "pragmatic MN"	Dilley, 598
"Methodological Naturalism" / "Non-Methodological Naturalism"	Dilley, 604
"natural" / "supernatural"	Collins, 663–65
"open" / "closed" system	Collins, 666
"nomothetic" / "historical"	Collins, 668
"natural" / "supernatural"	Moreland, 643–45, 648
"upper-story" / "lower-story"	Moreland, 646–48
"body" / "soul"	Moreland, 654–55
"small-scale design" / "large-scale system design"	Collins, 673
What God "will do" / "has done" (citing Boyle)	Meyer, 222
What God "will do" / "has done" (citing Helm)	Collins, 675
"random mutation" / "God's commands"	Grudem, 828
"natural evil" / "moral evil"	DeWeese, 683–85

But, none of this should be surprising to readers since, according to Moreland, "Christianity is a dualist, interactional religion" (652) to begin with.

In this line of thinking, it generally isn't seen as possible that these constructs are just that—heuristic constructs and simplifications. "The map is not the

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105 Other than those relating to divine action (see below), perhaps the most prominent are those false dichotomies that associate design with that which cannot be explained. As noted in Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 108, "We do not normally refer to things as being 'designed' on the grounds that we do not have any explanation for how they came into being."

106 Some of the entries in the table are not neatly contrasted in an immediate pair by the author but are promoted, nonetheless.

territory," as the saying goes. But in *Theistic Evolution,* it almost seems as if the map *really is* the territory, so to dispute one is to dispute the other.[107]

The most problematic manifestation of this trend is the selectively either/or mentality when it comes to divine action. Either God acts, or human beings, nature, or "physical causes" (whatever that means) do. Since this is one of the most confusing and important aspects of the debate, a separate section is devoted to it below.

Divine Action: The Heart of the Debate

In a word, the authors of *Theistic Evolution*—much like some of the evolutionary creationists they're criticizing—adopt a view of divine action that is dominant in modern and Greek (Epicurean) philosophy that strongly differs from both a biblical and a "traditional" Christian theological perspective. The general features of this view are as follows.

First, *divine action is viewed as a zero-sum dualism*. Either God does something, or a "natural mechanism" or "physical cause" does.[108] Therefore, when it comes to creation activity, evolutionary (or "natural") mechanisms are largely viewed as *competition* to God instead of being (a) *one way of describing* phenomena/events (in a multi-aspectual universe)[109] or (b) a *means* of God's action when it comes to creation. "Naturalist theism" or "theistic naturalism"—where God ordinarily works through the observable world—is viewed as oxymoronic. This general perspective is an extension of the natural/supernatural dualism above: the "natural world" (where everyday things happen) is to be *contrasted* with the "supernatural world" (where God, spiritual things, and miracles primarily exist).

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107 For one brief and critical look at this problem, see Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery,* 325–26; Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine;* Placher, *Essentials*.

108 This view is captured in Francis Collins, *The Language of God,* 52: "Anyone who claims the blooming of a flower is a miracle is treading upon a growing understanding of plant biology, which is well on the way to elucidating all the steps between seed germination and the blossoming of a beautiful and sweet-smelling rose, all directed by that plant's DNA instruction book." Collins (and other evolutionary creationists) unfortunately adopt the modern, Humean, technical meaning of "miracle" (a divine intervention or violation of nature; see, David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, L. A.* Selby Bigge, ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1902], pp. 114–16). The idea and language of "miracles" is addressed more below.

109 Thus, Haarsma, *Four Views,* 132, is right to emphasize, "*A scientific explanation does not eliminate God.* For the Christians, a scientific explanation glorifies God by revealing his handiwork." According to Placher's thesis, this issue is symptomatic of a larger dissonance: the new scientific universe, being calculated, literal, and rational, "had no symbolically appropriate place for God" (*The Domestication of Transcendence,* 131); the change in linguistic preference/semantics (away from the metaphorical and analogical—the bread and butter of theology) resulted in an ideological change of thought (towards the literal and propositional—away from the theological). In other words, when language systems change, thought systems change. Eliminating Christian theology only requires eliminating religious language, which is what happened when "scientific" semantics and systems became the privileged form of discourse.

The universe is not really God's play-ground, God's "temple" (Ps 104:1–4; 148), or the "theatre of God's glory" (Calvin).[110]

Examples of this problematic perspective are easily found in *Theistic Evolution.* Grudem says that, in theistic evolution, "new forms of life are the result of random mutation, not God's commands" (828). Likewise, Axe says, "Credit for the invention of living things with all their marvelous features, thus, rightfully goes not to natural selection but to the one who invented them: God" (100). Similarly, Collins concludes that "Since natural selection and random mutations can account for the origins of biological systems (and their appearances of design), theistic evolutionists steadfastly deny the need to propose an actual designing intelligence" (47).[111] Maftti argues the same: "Darwin and his followers explicitly claim that chance variation and the law of natural selection have created all species of living organisms. If so, design is ruled out. In contrast, if design is the cause of the creation of species, then chance and law are ruled out as the creators of species" (163; cf. 433). According to Grudem, "theistic evolution *takes away that evidence for God* [referring to Rom 1] *completely . . .* the existence of all living things can be explained solely from the properties of matter itself" (830).

Second, in this modern perspective there is *an acute emphasis on God's transcendence—which is contrasted with God's immanence—such that God and God's action is primarily known by empirical "interventions" and "miracles."*[112] The primary understanding of God's relationship to the world is not an organic or deeply involved relationship, but aligns with an exclusively Western monarchical/political view where God rules from the throne by decree and hierarchical administration. Immanence is viewed as a *contrast* (not comparison or complement) to God's transcendence. God is not primarily known by the regularities in nature, historical faithfulness to covenants, by the new world and community created by Jesus, or any other number of sources, but by the one-time creation event and supernatural miracles scattered in biblical texts and at certain points in earth's primitive history (e.g., origin of cellular life).[113] The whole model of creation is, to

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110 *Institutes,* 1.5.8; 2.6.1. See also, W. David O. Taylor, ed., *The Theater of God's Glory: Calvin, Creation, and the Liturgical Arts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

111 To be more accurate, Collins should have said "steadfastly deny the need to propose miraculous interventions," not propose "designing intelligence." Evolutionary creationists have always affirmed that God is the intelligent Designer of the universe, but not with the qualifications that ID theorists demand.

112 This entire discussion is plagued by confusion surrounding "intervention," "miracle," and "special divine action," all of which may or may not be referring to the same thing. Combined with many other landmines, one can readily agree with Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:209: "The story of the debate about divine action over the last half century has essentially been one of conceptual muddles and dead-ends."

113 The apologetic method employed by ID and *Theistic Evolution* contributors is generally "evidential" (cf. the work of Josh McDowell, Gary Habermas). This is not the only valid approach. See Steven B. Cowan, ed. *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

borrow from one theologian, a "production model" which "emphasizes the beginnings of creation rather than its continuing, ongoing character; it can speak of divine transcendence only in an external way, making it difficult to affirm the immanence of God; and it is intellectual or aesthetic, implying a dualistic hierarchy of mind and body."[114] In that way, the authors of *Theistic Evolution* are unwittingly building off of Newton's mechanical metaphysic.[115]

Thus, we read in *Theistic Evolution* that "God acted in a scientifically detectable way" (Dilley, 626); God supernaturally intervenes (739), and operates in the category of "supernatural" where God can "'infuse' special operations of his power into this web at anytime, e.g., by adding objects, directly causing events," (664–65), for "[i]t is inherent in the traditional Christian metaphysic that 'miracles'—or better, 'supernatural events'—are possible" (666). Meyer therefore sees the world as operating on its own by default—not unlike his secular scientist contemporaries. He says, "I see no reason to *assume* that the designing intelligence responsible for life and the universe (whom I personally believe was God) necessarily confined his activity to the very beginning of the universe" (221);[116] God intervened later in history to create life.[117]

Meyer and Nelson similarly argue, "Theistic evolutionists and mainstream evolutionary biologists assume that all living systems necessarily were produced by some naturalistic process, and that their origins will, thus, ultimately have a

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114 McFague, *The Body of God,* 151. This is in contrast to what she calls "procreative model," which is dynamic instead of static, and (building off Rom 8:22) sees creation as one long process of giving birth.

115 "If the world is understood as a closed causal system, as it was widely taken to be throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then divine action appears to be restricted in ordering that system initially in creation and intervening within it later on in miracle" (Thomas Tracy, "Introduction" in *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations,* ed. Thomas Tracy [Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State Press, 1994], 2).

116 As noted in the introduction, many evolutionary creationists also (unfortunately) buy into this construction. Meyer's criticism here is directed towards a view that is adequately summarized in Karl Giberson and Francis Collins, *The Language of Science and Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 67: "The model for divinely guided evolution that we are proposing here thus requires no 'intrusions from outside' for its account of God's creation process, except for the origins of the natural laws guiding the process." I would argue with church tradition—and especially in conjunction with the theses of McFague, Janzen, and Tanner—that the concept of "from outside" itself needs to be problematized or at least reevaluated. The same goes for "additional direct intelligent *input*" (Lennox cited in Grudem, 833, emphasis mine).

117 The old-earth creationist model of Hugh Ross is very similar, only with multiple acts of intervention other than the miraculous injection of biological information. "Concerning life's progression," he summarizes, "old earth creationists consider mass speciation events as divine interventions, occasion in which God introduces diverse species appropriate for Earth's changing conditions and in optimal ecological relationships" (Hugh Ross, "A Progressive Creationist Perspective," in *Four Views,* 72). Ross also proposes three kinds of miracles (74), which (as argued below) is actually a step in the right direction insofar as it breaks up the simplistic, binary dualism of modern thought, but is still problematic in its basic orientation. A better alternative are the three kinds of "signs" (or "miracles") in James McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 186–89.

completely naturalistic or materialistic explanation" (589)—the use of "completely" is here to stress that it is *godless*. Regarding this confrontation-by-supernatural-miracles/interventions, Axe believes in light of the biblical narrative that "God himself seems to endorse this perspective" (103).[118] Likewise, Moreland concludes that "if we come to church as theistic evolutionists, a supernatural, intervening God and a knowledge-based Bible are less at home in our worldview, and indeed, may fairly be called ad hoc" (652)—assuming the entire time, of course, that "a supernatural, intervening God and a knowledge-based Bible" are not located, Western, and modern theological construction, but simply eternal, absolute, timeless truth to which all Christians must adhere.

What is problematic about this perspective of God, creation, and divine action? And what might be a constructive response?

Alternative Perspectives Should Be Genuinely Assessed, Not Dismissed
First of all, the options should be seriously weighed.

Axe and Collins very briefly acknowledge an alternative(s) to the zero-sum view of divine action, but only as lip service. This results in considerable incoherence. Axe, for instance, says,

> [C]auses and effects that scientists justifiably consider to be random or accidental may also be instances of God-ordained events. The two are not mutually exclusive. I certainly agree with this. But [some] things are not at all inconsistent with God's presence, but neither do they *confront* us with his presence. (90)

But one may ask at this point: *what truly confronts us with God's presence?* The stars in the sky? A symphonic melody communicating transcendent beauties? A prophet from God screaming in one's face about how we've prostituted ourselves to pagan deities? A preacher on Sunday morning speaking words of forgiveness to those who need it? Apparently not. *Theistic Evolution* makes it clear that what confronts us with God's presence is *whatever the ID scientists tell us confronts us with God's presence*—which is typically the origin of biological information and a select handful of other events that make the empirical cut. There is otherwise no sound basis talking about God's action (cf. Meyer, 222). In this fashion, the pluriform divine speech that saturates the cosmos, from one corner to the next, is muffled in order to showcase (indeed, idolize) the sound emanating from under the microscope.

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118 Contrast with, for example, Darrel Faulk, *Coming to Peace with Science* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 206: "Although God clearly desires that all humankind will be drawn to him, I am not sure that God is in the habit of using the 'magic' of miracles to draw humankind to God's being. I do not see this as being God's style."

Similarly, Collins acknowledges that in scripture, "ordinary pregnancy [to use one example] is God's action (see Ps 39:13–15; Jer 1:5), as is Elizabeth's pregnancy with John, and Mary's with Jesus (Luke 1:35–37)" (661). Regarding the slaying of the Assyrians (2 Kgs 19) and the possibly parallel account of Herodotus (where mass death was due to a mice infestation), Collins asks, "Are they competing alternatives? Certainly not: a 'supernatural' event can use means (mice), and if the mice were a 'natural' occurrence, it is still, to the eye of faith, God's act" (664). Collins even says, "it is never correct to refer to the miraculous as having God more 'directly' or 'immediately' involved." (663). But, just when one thinks progress is being made, Collins breaks his own rule on the very next page (saying that God "directly" causes events) and spends the rest of the chapter arguing in favor of the competing perspective!

This blatant contradiction leaves one marveling. But it demonstrates that the ID movement—and the theological framework undergirding *Theistic Evolution*—would crumble without a competitive view of divine action. If God's action cannot be monopolistically attributed to specific "interventions" and "miracles," then it can be more broadly attributed to a variety of other phenomena witnessed in the world—including evolution. But because evolution is discounted from the start, all else must conform as a consequence.

We should note that this problematic perspective goes all the way back the 17th century scientist Robert Boyle (whom Meyer and others cite favorably in *Theistic Evolution*).[119]

> Notice the picture that Boyle presupposed; God as First Cause set the universe running according to fixed laws, and thereafter intervenes only rarely to perform the occasional miracle. Given such a picture, miracles now had evidentiary value. As long as our mystified wonder defined a miracle, it had no more status as "evidence" for the truth of faith than any other event, properly understood. But if the defining characteristic of a miracle was that it violated the laws of nature, then a properly established miracle constituted good evidence that something beyond the (newly defined) natural order.[120]

Thus, God's action became confined to the empirical in the context of a modern apologetic argument.

This issue goes back even further to Greek philosophy and an early "founder" of modernism—Lucretius (and his disciple Epicurus).[121] N. T. Wright makes note

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119 Note that some evolutionary creationists also favorably cite Boyle to support their position.

120 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 37.

121 See Steven Greenblatt, *Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012). This is all the more concerning when ID theorists themselves identify Epicureanism as providing "the prototype of the meaningless universe—godless, governed by chance, purposeless" (Wiker and

of this and points out the liability of going along with it in the context of modern science:

> Let's leave aside the problems that some still suggest are latent within a Darwinian account the way the world is. Supposing it all works, it does not follow that the Epicurean worldview [where] . . . causation [is] a zero-sum game, so that *either* God *or* observable physical causes were involved. As soon as you challenge that rather naïve assumption, all sorts of other options are open . . . [Creationism and evolutionism both] inherit and operate within the deeply damaged vision of the creator and the cosmos that they get from Deism, and which shares its worst features with Epicureanism: that some things happen naturally, while other things only happen because God makes them happen.[122]

Those who insist on the zero-sum perspective have an awkward biblical-theological problem on their hands. If summer changes into winter and no catastrophic flood is in sight, believers are justified in saying "God is faithful," and if an east wind parted the Red Sea, the Israelites are justified in saying "God parted the Red Sea," and if quail come in time to feed the hungry Israelites, they are justified in saying "God brought us quail," and if spears, swords and pagan armies from the first millennium BC destroy Jerusalem, the prophets are justified in saying "God judged Jerusalem," and if hydrogen and helium (in conformity with simple regularities of attraction, repulsion, etc.) "creates" the cosmos, we are justified in saying, "God created the cosmos." But if biological evolution (in conformity with various mechanisms, some that we're currently aware of and some that we're not)[123] "creates" life, *no one is ever justified in saying "God created life."* Why not? Because the creation of cellular life is apparently a special exception in the entire enterprise of God's creative activity.

Aside from this inconsistency, another problem of this conclusion is that

> no absolute distinction exists between the living and the nonliving, for life is a type of organization, not an entity or substance. As Ian

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Witt, *A Meaningful World,* 16). Cf. William Dembski, *No Free Lunch: Why Specified Complexity Cannot Be Purchased Without Intelligence* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 1–2.

122 N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Scripture* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 13–14.

123 Both evolutionary creationists (convinced that "natural selection" is the "primary driver of evolution" [Haarsma, *Four Views,* 143–44]) and their critics (those subscribing to Neo-Darwinism or the view that evolutionary creation is "a convoluted and scientifically vacuous explanation," [Meyer, *Theistic Evolution,* ch. 2]) seem to adopt a "we've arrived" posture. They might benefit from Kojonen's observation: "if we believe that in some debate one side has all the good arguments, and the other side is fully mistaken, there is no harm is stating that conclusion. What I am saying is that in my experience we often reach this kind of conclusion prematurely" (*The Intelligent Design Debate,* 8).

> Barbour reminds us, the chemical elements in our hands and brains were forged in the furnaces of stars. On the other hand, the higher levels should not be reduced to or understood entirely in terms of the lower levels, as reductionists claim.[124]

"Life" vs. "nonlife" is a human construct—a heurism. It is as subjective as the classification of organisms—whether based on genetics, function, or location. This is not to say it is absolutely arbitrary, for different constructs exist for different reasons, some are more helpful than others, and some more easily reflect human experience than others.[125] But neither is the life/non-life construct absolute.

Ultimately, non-evolutionary creationists must demonstrate why anyone (including God) should single out DNA in such a way that it alters general theological method. Few Christians have ever doubted the marvel and wonder of biological life. That's not the question. The question is whether any Christian should uphold the creation of biological life as a fundamental rift upon which epistemology, theology, and experiences of God should all be altered.

Transcendence and Immanence Should Not (Cannot) Be Contrasted

Second, contrary to popular theological belief, God's transcendence should not be contrasted with God's immanence. This contrast was a development of modern theology, which complements both the zero-sum game perspective on divine action and the general natural/supernatural dualism. The optimistic attitude of modernism attempted to "get God under control" and make faith "rational." But as a result, the transcendence of God became "domesticated."

> Increasingly, Christian writers in the 17th century, since they did not want to think of God utterly beyond their comprehension, thought of God's otherness in terms of distance and remoteness in the world. Though they did not use the terms, they were in effect contrasting *transcendence* with *immanence* . . . [this] makes divine transcendence and involvement in the world into a zero-sum game:

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124 McFague, *The Body of*, 106. On the concept of "emergence," see also, Jamin Hübner, "A Concise Theory of Emergence," *Faith and Thought 57* (Oct 2015): 2–17. It does no good to hang all the weight on the "breath of life" distinction in Gen 1–3. Christians are under no obligation to absolutize the categories of the biblical authors in contemporary thought any more than biologists must categorize all living things as either birds, fish, and things on the ground (Gen 1:2–25). This is particularly true given discoveries made since the biblical text was written, such as viruses (whether biological or digital), machine learning and AI, and various marine structures that blur lines between "living" and "nonliving." For more on a non-reductionist, Christian metaphysic, see Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) in conjunction with Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning* (Middletown: Wesleyan, 2013, orig. 1977)

125 Cf. the periodic table of elements. There is no one way to organize atoms on a table, but the way on the periodic table is agreeably the most functional and meaningful.

the more involved or immanent, the less transcendent, and vice versa.[126]

"The incomprehensibility of God"—a principle as old as theology itself—was viewed as a curse for the modern thinker instead of a blessing.[127] "Protestants . . . moved toward an un-Reformation optimism about human reason's ability to understand what we say about God."[128] This was manifest in the post-reformation scholasticism as embodied in English Puritanism, the thought of Francis Turretin, and lengthy dogmatic documents such as the Westminster Standards.[129] "Knowledge" became simple "correspondence with reality" (as Moreland argues in *Theistic Evolution,* along the lines of Thomas Reid). This was a move away from Calvin's view (and the Apostle Paul's hermeneutic)[130] that true knowledge is "not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely fits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and takes root in the heart."[131] Practically anticipating the Enlightenment's most loyal followers (and ID theorists for that matter), Calvin further argued that "Of these things which it is neither given nor lawful to know ignorance is learned; the craving to know, as a kind of madness."[132] Human beings, especially Christians, must be constantly aware of their epistemic limitations. And as Calvin also argued, the "knowledge" of faith operates on a different level than simple sense perception and empirical observation.[133]

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126 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 111. Cf. Dorothy Soelle, *Thinking About God* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 190: "Transcendence is radical immanence." Cf. John Barclay, "Introduction," *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment,* ed. Simon Gathercole and John Barclay (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 7, who provides examples in the New Testament of this in action—God's activity *increasing* (not decreasing) with human action.

127 The same went for the Trinity, deity of Christ, the historical reliability of the gospels, etc.

128 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 80.

129 There, "the pattern of decrees, rather than the activity of the Triune God, thus became the shaping principle for theology." Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 80. Furthermore, "the primary-secondary causation distinction is a distinction beloved by Calvinists . . . it has been something of a godsend, for it permits Christian historians to posit exactly the same kind of causal process as their secular colleagues" (Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:131).

130 Todd Still and Bruce Longenecker, *Thinking Through Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 360.

131 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.9. Cf. McFague, *The Body of God,* 89: "[O]ur function as human beings on this planet is not mainly to think correct thoughts that correspond to some external set of verities, but to live appropriately and responsibly."

132 *Institutes*, 3.23.8; cf. 3.21.2.

133 *Institutes*, 3.2.14: "When we call faith 'knowledge' we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man's mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity . . . the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension." Only the Neo-Calvinist tradition (i.e., Kuyper and Bavinck) in Reformed theology—the true successors of Calvin's thought—was aware of this flattening of knowledge and shift into epistemological over-confidence. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation,* ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 41: "[I]n Reformed theology too,

As seen in Placher above, all of this—along with Newton's mechanical view of the universe and other contemporary developments—forged deism and the modern transcendence-immanence dichotomy. However, this is neither necessary nor coherent.

> A self-determined transcendence does not limit God's relation with the world to one of distance. A radical transcendence does not exclude God's positive fellowship with the world or presence within it. Only created beings, which remain themselves over and against others, risk the distinctness of their own natures by entering into intimate relations with another. God's transcendence alone is one that may be properly exercised in the radical immanence by which God is said to be nearer to us than we are to ourselves . . . It is the mutual exclusiveness of *all* apparent antitheses, not just that of transcendence and immanence, which must give way before such a God. This means that God must not be identified with one side of an exclusive contrast, the world with the other.[134]

Models of God and creation that give justice to realization are numerous and cannot all be mentioned here.[135] But, for readers of *Theistic Evolution,* it is extremely important to note that they (a) exist, (b) are actually more "traditional" in Christian theology (more on this below), (c) are not discussed, or really even mentioned, in *Theistic Evolution.* Whatever direction one goes, one must take seriously the God

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the significance of God's incomprehensibility was increasingly lost from view. While it was still taught, it existed in the abstract and exerted no influence." Bavinck is vindicated in the fact that most theologies today under the "Protestant-Reformed" or "Reformed" label rarely address the incomprehensibility of God in a way that seriously tempers the certainties and types of claims made by the theologian.

134 Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 79–80. Note that McFague's organic model, which sees the incarnation of Jesus as the microcosm of the what's going on in the macrocosmos (the "body of God"), is also "the radicalization of both divine transcendence and immanence" (*Body of God,* 133). McFague, of course, is taking her cue from the earlier work of Grace Janzen, *God's World God's Body* (Louisville: WJK, 1984), 101: "It will be much more helpful if transcendence and immanence could be seen as mutually enriching concepts rather than mutually destructive." In any case, the modern predominance over this topic has left many theologians frustrated; "It is time for Christianity to outgrow its dishonest deployments of the rhetoric of divine transcendence." Catherine Keller, "The Flesh of God" in *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God,* ed. Darby Ray (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 102.

135 Other than traditional process models, various panentheisms, the organic model of McFague, and traditional models (see Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 113–16), see those discussed in William Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 4 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017–2019)—although, Abraham is noticeably cynical about any other views than his own. He issues particularly strong warnings for those in the wake of Robert Russell: "If we cannot attend to special divine action in theology, we will be endlessly frustrated; special divine action will not be found lodged in the mysteries, gaps, and chaos of modern physics. It would be better to declare theology a bankrupt enterprise than to bail it out with quantum theory" (Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action*, 1:162).

who is "ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν" ("above all *and* through all *and* in all," Eph 4:6, emphasis mine; cf. 1:23; Rom 15:28; Col 3:11; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:28).

"Interventions" and "Miracles" Must Be Reconceived for a Post-Modern Theology
Third, "interventions" and "miracles" are two terms that, because of their meta-physical baggage, are more of a liability than an asset.

There are good reasons why "divine intervention has become something of a swear word in this discussion"[136]—but not for the reasons traditionally given (e.g., that God didn't "get it right the first time").[137] Indeed, as Abraham shrewdly observes, "It is not impious to say in this context that God is a Cosmic Repairman; the theological term for this is 'Savior.'"[138] If God intended to "get it right the first time" (whatever this might mean), there probably shouldn't have been an evil snake wandering around paradise. Both creation *and* redemption are not restricted to the earliest eons of the world or to the first-century, but are an ongoing process that God's people are called to participate in. Many evolutionary creationists have emphasized this for decades and are right for doing so[139]; this creative process is nothing to be ashamed of, but something that points towards God's power, patience, and wisdom.[140]

The reason "intervention" and "miracle" language is problematic (though not entirely and absolutely obsolete) because of what it suggests, namely, *that God is absent.*[141] It also re-affirms that natural/supernatural dualism and transcendence/

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136 Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:150.

137 This argument is repeated *ad nauseum* by evolutionary creationist works. It should probably be laid to rest. It apparently originated with the German mathematician, Gottfried Leibniz. See William Placher, ed. *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville: WJK, 2003), 97.

138 Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:162.

139 This is why it is plain misrepresentation of evolutionary creation to say "God did not *actively make* anything, but merely upheld (or observed) the ongoing natural processes that were themselves directly responsible for the origin of all life forms" (Grudem, 74), that evolutionary creation is "a re-affirmation of some materialistic version of evolutionary theory restated using theological ter-minology" (Meyer, 48), and that the Nicene Creed "contradicts the claim of theistic evolution that God was the 'maker' only of the initial inanimate matter in the universe and that matter, apart from divine guidance, or intervention, eventually developed by purely natural process into 'all things visible'" (Allison, 929). These are particularly odd claims to make since within the same book (on page 565 in this case) Meyer explicitly quotes Darrel Faulk affirming "God's ongoing presence and activity in the universe." This is not to say all evolutionary creationists have done a fine job explaining this issue (many haven't), but that is no excuse for this type of plain misrepresentation.

140 Contrast with Francis Collins, who argues in *The Language of God,* 107, that, "Evolution, as a mechanism, can be and must be true. But that says nothing about the nature of its author." Ignoring the shameless spirit of modernist inevitability in the first sentence, BioLogos' advocates have fortunately corrected the odd claim in the second sentence. For example, Haarsma, *Four Views,* 136, 144, contends that evolutionary development *does* say something about God.

141 "[A] theory of occasional intervention implies as its correlative a theory of ordinary absence." Aubrey Moore (1848–1890), cited in Alexander and White, *Science, Faith and Ethics,* 58. Cf. "If God 'intervenes' in the world, that implies that the Deity ordinarily stands apart from it." Mark Corner, *Signs of God: Miracles and Their Interpretation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 7. Cited in

immanence contrast that simply cannot square with either the biblical narratives or contemporary critical thought. In modernism, "miracles" are in the "supernatural" realm (where God and spiritual things are), while everything else "down here" in the "natural world" is in the realm of everyday creation and "real life." But that's not how the biblical authors portray God's involvement in the world or their experience of God in the world.

> The dichotomy between natural and supernatural is a relatively recent one. . . . There were no "miracles" (in the sense of events deviating from that which was 'natural'), there were only signs of the deity's activity (sometimes favorable, sometimes not). . . . There is nothing 'natural' about the world in biblical theology, nor should there be in ours.[142]

Hence, notable reference works plainly state that, "Prior to the 5th cent. CE, people believed that everything within the cosmos and every activity was an act of God's intervention. The rising of the sun every morning, the breeze that came up on the sea, the nighttime panorama of moon and stars: all this was miracle."[143]

"Nature" or the "natural world"—from forests to corporate offices—is more or less "God's home."[144] It is where God acts, reveals, participates.[145] As Augustine

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Sarah Ritchie, "Does the Success of Science Leave God Unemployed? (Part 2)," Biologos.org (May 4, 2016).

142 John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 18. Cf. Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 20: "The word 'nature' in current usage has picked up certain overtones derived from Enlightenment thinking which make people using the word feel as if they are referring to something quasi-autonomous—and even Christians can begin to think of nature as something independent of God. But this is the exact opposite of the biblical doctrine of creation!"

143 Wendy Cotter, "Miracle," ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006–2009), 100.

144 To be sure, the biblical authors often speak of God dwelling "in heaven" or "in the heavens/sky" (a metaphor for "heaven"). But, again, this is not the distant, utterly separate sphere that it is often interpreted to be in modern theology. In fact, part of the goal of the church is to be the new Temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19), the intersecting place where heaven and earth meet, praying that God's will be done "on earth as it is in heaven," (Matt 6:10), that God's "kingdom come" (Luke 11:2). In Revelation, at the consummation of the age, that union is made complete (Rev 21:1–2), and "God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). In addition to J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), see N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

145 Ritchie perceptively concludes the "Divine Action" series of Biologos ("Why We Can't "Solve" The Problem of Divine Action," Biologos.org [June 27, 2016]) with the prompt: "One goal for the future, I suggest, is an examination of robust forms of 'naturalism,' or rather an understanding of how the 'natural' is inherently bound up with divine agency." One finds something like this in the work of McFague, Clayton, and process thinkers though there is certainly more work to be done—especially in bridging the gap between exegetical/biblical theology and systematic and philosophical theology. Tracy, *The God Who Acts,* is perhaps the most directly helpful single volume on the subject of divine action. Vernon White, *The Fall of a Sparrow: A Concept of Divine Action* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1985) is a close second.

put it, "Nature is what [God] does."[146] Any "intervention," then, is not like some-
one from outside the house bursting in the back door, but like the owner of the
house going from one room to another (though even here the analogy fails because
God is not restricted to one place at a time).[147] Somehow, even human agency can
be easily aligned with divine agency—like at key points in biblical narratives
(e.g., Gen 50:20; Phil 2:12–13; Rom 12:3; cf. Acts 27).[148] It makes little sense to
talk about how certain phenomena "defies reduction to natural causes" (Axe, 83),
or even how "laws are violated." "Laws" are observed regularities. Things that do
not fit our descriptions or experience of what is regular do not automatically put
them in theoretical realms outside the "natural." To do this would commit a rad-
ical idealistic leap—suggesting that one's understanding of the world can be no
different than how the world is outside of my understanding.

> There is not an independent causal continuum in which it is puz-
> zling how God could intervene. . . . Divine action is not an inter-
> ruption or in violation of the normal cause of things, but precisely
> *is* the normal course of things.[149]

Or, as Augustine put it in *The City of God,* miracles are not "contrary to nature, but
contrary to what is *known* of nature."[150]

> No one ever says, "God didn't do miraculous things for David the
> way God did for Moses and Elijah." The texts as we have them
> assume that God is at work in *all* of this history . . . God works in
> history—sometimes more dramatically and sometimes through

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146 Augustine, *Literal Commentary on Genesis,* 6.13.24.
147 McFague's organic model is particularly favorable in sorting out these problems (and comple-
ments Pauline theology on agency in particular). But it has been almost entirely misrepresented
and misunderstood by onlookers as either collapsing into the problems of early 20th century pro-
cess theology or into some sort of pantheism. For example, in an otherwise good book, James
Peterson, *Changing Human Nature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 16, carelessly brushes
aside McFague's thesis in a highly misleading two-sentence dismissal (only to then repeat one
of her core points on pp. 39 and 65 with drawing the connection, while also giving a free pass to
Eastern Orthodox "divinization" on p. 42). Even Abraham in his four-volume opus on the sub-
ject fails to interact with the organic model (and yet is willing to dismiss all versions of process
thought—presumably with all versions of panentheism—as a "serious intellectual disease," 1:145).
In short, contemporary theologians—even those specializing on divine action—cannot seem to
grasp that (a) panentheism is not simply "process theology," and (b) the panentheism of McFague,
Clayton, and Moltmann cannot simply be lumped together with the panentheism of Whitehead
and Hartshorne.
148 "The two agencies thus stand in direct and not inverse proportion: the more a human agent is
operative, the more (not the less) may be attributed to God." Barclay, "Introduction," *Divine and
Human Agency in Paul,* 7.
149 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 190. Keener misses this in *Miracles*, 1:182 when
demanding, "[H]ow is it logical consistency to insist that a consistent God must work *only* through
the normal character of time and space?"
150 Augustine, *City of God*, 21.8.

more ordinary behavior of natural forces and human actors—and the differences do not much matter.[151]

Let me provide an illustration. Two girls in the backseat of an SUV are on their way to Yellowstone National Park. Their parents are in the front seat. They've been driving for hours on interstate. The girls are playing cards minding their own business and oblivious about what's going on around them, when suddenly a deer jumps in front of the car. They slam forward into their seatbelts to a grinding halt. At that "disruptive" point, they remember that they were hurdling through space at 80 mph. Before then, they forgot this little detail. Similarly, "The occasional event in radical violation of the normal order of things serves only to 'renew our remembrance' that God was directing every event in the normal order as well."[152]

This "remembrance" is particularly meaningful when such irregularities carefully take place within a covenantal, narrative context.[153] In fact, one could go as far as to say that fully attending to the site of divine action is "worship."[154] It is quite frequent for those pursued by God in the biblical narratives to build an alter and worship there—because it is the site of where something significant has occurred. Of course, "worship" has always emphasized the divine presence, so this is hardly a surprise.

It is typical for modern thinkers to discard this perspective on grounds that "God can do whatever God wants," and can perform a "true" miracle by "violating natural laws." Keener argues that "a Creator would hardly be impressed with any demand that this God be subject to patterns of nature that this God initiated," as do Meyer and Collins in *Theistic Evolution* (221, 666–69).[155] Again, this mostly misses the point and confuses the burden of proof. The question is not what God can or has done, but *what human beings can know and what that means*.

Kaufman elaborates on this point, offering us a super-sized slice of humble pie worth quoting at length:

> Our modern picture, most of us believe, takes into account many of the details of life and experience that were unknown to earlier generations—the velocity of light and the red-shift in the spectrum of certain lights in the heavens, the relativity of all measurements of time, the conservation and the convertability [*sic*] of matter and

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151 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 192.
152 Ibid.*,* 136.
153 Cf. "Miracle" in the *CEB Bible Dictionary* (CEB Bible, 2011), 265: "Most often in the OT and NT, a miracle functions as a sign, a communication of God's relationship with humankind and history."
154 Cf. James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 74–77.
155 Cf. Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 140–63. Licona is aware of the dispute regarding miracles but, unfortunately, uncritically maintains a modernist conception of them through his analysis.

energy, the complex atomic structure of matter, the evolution of life over many millennia here on earth, the ecological interdependence of all living forms and the threats to all of this posed by human pollution of the environment, depletion of resources, and destruction of other species; and so on. All of these are conceptions grounded on certain indecriminable differences experienced here on earth, and then extrapolated speculatively by magnificent imaginative acts into the vision of a universe billions of years old and hundreds of millions of light-years across. No one has ever moved back through these billions of years in time, to see whether presently observed patterns obtained then; nor can we move out hundreds of millions of light years in space, to see whether the regularities we observe here on earth hold there as well. *This whole picture of the world is the product of human imaginative construction.* Even such familiar reality as the sun is not known directly and immediately in experience for what it is; what we take it to be is constructed imaginatively on the basis of experienced patterns of light and heat here on earth. Today we explain these to ourselves in terms of a theory about a fiery star burning away in the skies, but most other peoples and cultures have not understood the sun in this distinctly modern way at all.

I am not suggesting there is any reason to doubt the existence and the reality of the sun, or, for that matter, of the most distant stars, or quasars, or "black holes." I am simply pointing out that all that we know about any of these is the result of human imaginative construction, on the basis of a very close and highly systematic scrutiny of a wide range of clues that we find in our experience here on earth. The human imagination is a magnificent instrument indeed: all our knowledge depends on it; and since our experience is always heavily shaped by what we think we know, it also is significantly constituted by the activity of the imagination. Doubtless our knowledge, experience, and reflection on these matters are all "objective" in the sense that they are intended to be not merely about ourselves but about the objects and structure of the world which environs us; but what we take all this to be and to mean is inevitably the result of our own imaginative construction, and it should not claim to be anything more.[156]

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156 Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery,* 255; emphasis mine.

This means that, contrary to modern epistemology, there generally is no raw, unmediated, unexperienced, or uninterpreted knowledge of the world.[157] So the greatest "law breaking" of any human experience still consists of *perceived irregularities*. If there is anything beyond that, it is, by definition, a mystery.[158] Furthermore, human experience and knowledge is as much a part of "nature" and the "world" as anything,[159] and such experience and knowledge only "works" when nature is "working," not where it *isn't*.[160]

What, then, can be said of "miracles"? Biologos recently stated in a mass email that "Miracles are simply cases where God chooses to work outside his usual patterns."[161] This is not an unfair one-sentence summary. Placher thickens it appropriately:

> [T]he revelatory "mighty acts of God" might be simply that event that enables us to see with particular clarity how we had daily been surrounded by God's mighty acts. . . . The Bible seems more firmly to say that some particular events are clues to the meaning of the whole.[162]

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157 Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 192: "Finite human beings cannot experience God's works without mediation. We always experience miracles through a created agency."

158 To speak to Collins' argument, "*lacunae ignorantiae causā*" (gaps due to ignorance) have a direct relationship to the concept of "*lacunae naturae causā*" (gaps due to nature), namely, that the former can be known and expected but the latter can only be speculative—and if speculative, no fit for (at least evidentialist and classical) Christian apologetics. Should time permit, on the other hand, one could explore the different kinds of mysteries—some of which, in fact, may have apologetic value.

159 "We are nature seeing nature. We are nature with a concept of nature" (Susan Griffin in McFague, *The Body of God,* 26).

160 To the extent that God is "transcendent" and exists "above and beyond" creation—and therefore poses a "distance" that needs to be "bridged," this is the entire point of "revelation," "divine accommodation," and the "incarnation" in Christian theology. But this should be no surprise; classical Christian theists have always taught that the transcendent is knowable by way of metaphor, analogy, and faith. "If God is really transcendent, then there is no epistemological path from us to God, and everything we know about God comes at God's initiative." Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 186. Placher then goes on to insightfully describe the role of narratives in knowing God. Hart, *The Experience of God,* 314, provides a similar answer but draws attention to meditation instead of narrative: "God, according to all the great spiritual traditions, cannot be comprehended by the finite mind but can nevertheless be known in an intimate encounter with his presence—one that requires considerable discipline of the mind and will to achieve, but one also implicit in all ordinary experience (if only one is attentive enough to notice)."

161 "Does modern science make miracles impossible?" *Biologos* email essay (sent to subscribers Mar 29, 2018).

162 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 191. Cf. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:44: that "some of an agent's actions are more revelatory of an agent than other acts . . . is surely entirely correct." Cf. McClendon, *Systematic Theology,* 2:186: "Miracles, in short, are signs, divine actions within creation in which the presence of God shines forth in power for (creative, and especially) redemptive ends (cf. John 20:30f)." Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity,* 192, also remarks: "Ultimately, miracles thus receive their meaning not from the past but from the future, new creation."

And more systematically:

> (1) Some historical events can provide a luminous key to under-
> standing all things.[163] (2) They do not happen to do so for many
> people, but there is something about the events themselves such
> that in them was special disclosure of the transcendent beginning
> and end of all things, we call God. (3) When we ask how God was
> acting differently in such events, however, we quickly realize that
> we lack the categories to describe such differences.[164]

Because of its ideological baggage, the term "miracle" itself need not have any
place in Christian discourse.[165] The question "do you believe in miracles?" or "are
miracles possible?" tend to stem from a series of false premises.[166] As such, one
can legitimately recite and genuinely believe in every single word of the Nicene

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163 Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity,* 192, goes further and suggests that one of these (the resur-
rection) is the key to understanding the trajectory of all such "miracles": "Christ's resurrection as
the most profound divine action known to us reveals the ultimate meaning of the miracle. Rather
than going against nature, it transcends and lifts up the natural. It points to the eschatological con-
summation when, according to the biblical promises, creation 'will be set free from its bondage to
decay' (Rom 8:21). In the resurrection even death will be defeated (1 Cor 15:55)."

164 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 193. I would qualify this last assertion, as noted
above, by adding a covenantal, narrative dimension which would perhaps provide those categories
in describing the differences. Hence, Denis Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix* (Grand Rapids:
Zondervan, 2003), 457, concludes: "This understanding emphasizes not the violation of 'laws of
nature', though this may be involved, but rather the purposeful and non-capricious actions of a God
in bringing the miracle about within a significant historical-religious context. In this view God is
the creator who actively sustains the whole created order and miracles are discernible as unusual
actions of God." In any case, it is misleading to say, "There is never a hint in the Bible that certain
types of event in the natural world are any more or any less the activity of God than other events"
(Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 101), especially as there are plenty of psalms
and reflections in the Bible that distance God from some events and bring God closer to others.

165 Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 21, also (rightly) suggest the same for the term
"naturalism": "Since the word 'naturalism' is redundant for Christians it is best simply to drop
using it altogether in reference to their involvement in science." In any case, a major seman-
tic problem for systematicians in this whole debacle is the confusion between "special divine
action" (Abraham) and "miracle." Also note that "[t]he English term miracle is derived from Latin
miraculum (a "marvel"), but *miraculum* is never used in the Vulgate (the Latin translation of the
OT and NT by Jerome in the late 4th cent. CE)" (Wendy Cotter, "Miracle," ed. Katharine Doob
Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009], 99).

166 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1:116, goes as
far as to say that "The supranaturalistic theory of miracles makes God a sorcerer and a cause of
'possession'; it confuses God with demonic structures in the mind and in reality." While I perhaps
wouldn't go that far, his more interesting claim is that "One can say that ecstasy in the miracle of
the mind, and miracle is the ecstasy or reality" (117). What he then says turns the modern Christian
perspective (as embodied in, say, Licona, Meyer, and mainstream apologists) upside down: "Since
neither ecstasy nor miracle destroys the structure of cognitive reason, scientific analysis, psycho-
logical and physical, as well as historical investigation are possible and necessary. Research can
and must proceed without restriction . . . . Scientific explanation and historical criticism protect
revelation; they cannot dissolve it, for revelation belongs to a dimension of reality for which
scientific and historical analysis are inadequate." That is, it is not the supernatural character of
miracles that makes them observable and important, but their coherent in-this-world structure.

Creed and yet deny all "miracles."[167] It should be noted, after all, that primary biblical language of miracle equivalents is not "miracles" but rather "signs and wonders" and "mighty deeds" (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, Deut 6:22; Dan 4:2–3; Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; cf 2 Cor 12:12).[168] Christians—especially in talking about divine action in the context of creation, evolution, etc.—might be wise to follow suite and return to this more accurate and uncharged language.[169]

The "Traditional" Christian Metaphysic is Pre-Modern, Not Modern
John Collins specifically rejects the observations just made above. After providing a chapter supporting the natural/supernatural dualism and the modern perspective on miracles, he says:

> I conclude, then, that those who insist that all events are in principle "natural" have taken a position that is inadequate in all the relevant dimensions. . . . By contrast, the traditional Christian metaphysic gives us a sound way of thinking about God's activity *in every event.* That is, we have no right to declare a priori that we may expect to find created natural factors alone to be adequate for everything. (677)

Collins claims that his perspective is the "traditional Christian metaphysic." But this is not the case.

Readers are given hints that Collins' view has problems when the primary line of evidence for the "traditional way of describing God's actions" (661) is found in the opinion of one obscure Lutheran theologian (Heinrich Schmid). (How is this a reliable gauge of "traditional" Christian theology?) The larger difficulties become clear, however, when facing church history itself.

Space does not permit a full delineation of this subject. One might turn to any number of systematic theologies to discover how inaccurate this claim to

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167 Furthermore, one might ask: if, for example, a red algae in the Nile spontaneously arose during the time of Egypt's judgement, is this really any less "miraculous" if it could not be explained as such? One could argue the same for the origin of life: no matter which account is given—the secular atheists "materialist" account or the young earth creationist's divine interventionist account—what occurred was absolutely bizarre and unique. Gaining knowledge of the "how" does nothing to trivialize the profundity of such events. (This may actually be one of the most persuasive arguments in favor of Jesus' resurrection: Jesus' resurrection is, in principle, no more bizarre than the first life.)

168 The distribution of the rendering "miracle" in English translations yields no apparent pattern. It appears 37 times in the KJV, 30 in the NIV, 11 in the NRSV, 12 in the ESV, 76 in the NLT, 23 in the CEB, 48 in the REB. I hope to see future translations lower this count as much as possible for accuracy reasons alone.

169 J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1993), 57–58, instinctively gives primacy to biblical language and concepts, but then unconsciously defaults to the modern perspective, where "the God who made the world can *still* intrude creatively into it" (emphasis mine).

"traditional theology" is.[170] However, chapters of Placher's *The Domestication of Transcendence* helpfully provide some of the broad contours. He uses Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin as the template for his discussion regarding God's action in the world and how transcendence became "domesticated" in modernity.[171]

For Aquinas, "God does not 'intervene' in the world as if God had for the most part been watching from the sidelines."[172] As Aquinas himself noted, "God acts in every agent immediately, without prejudice to the action of the will and of nature."[173] Thus, "divine shaping of my will is not an interference in the natural order; it *is* the natural order."[174] In Aquinas, God is always presented as a mystery, not the center or solution of a metaphysical system. This is because, by definition, God is mysterious. Whether literal or metaphorical, our language of God must therefore not be univocal.[175] In contrast to popular sentiments about Aquinas's scholasticism, all theology must be done with this tremendous humility. In fact, "We cannot know what God is."[176] "From God's perspective, the pieces *do* fit together, and one can see God at work in the trials of our lives. But no human theologian can occupy that perspective, and so, even make such confident claims to reach beyond faith."[177]

Calvin, similarly, "was willing to leave questions unanswered, 'necessary consequences' underived, and apparent inconsistencies suspended in tension."[178] "Like Aquinas on the nature of our language about God," Placher continues, "Calvin counseled against claiming to know too much, or claiming to say what we know more clearly than we can."[179] And again, like Aquinas, "Calvin's God does not 'intervene' in the world, as if generally elsewhere but entering the picture from time to time. God is always present and thoroughly engaged."[180] Hence,

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170 E.g., Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 303: "[A] miracle is not a violation of natural law, since God is no less involved with maintaining the ordinary order of the natural created world."

171 For brevity, what follows are some observations surrounding Aquinas' and Calvin's perspectives. In case you're wondering, Luther's general views on divine action aren't much different than Aquinas and Calvin—at least in Placher's assessment.

172 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence,* 114. For an enlightening article on Thomas Aquinas and evolution, see William Carol, "Creation, Evolution, and Thomas Aquinas," *Revue des Questions Scientifiques* 171:4 (2000): 319–47.

173 Aquinas, *On the Power of God,* 3.7.

174 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 120.

175 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 72.

176 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 21.

177 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 51.

178 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 53. The "necessary consequence" phrase comes from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.6, though Placher may be referring to some earlier reference of which I am unaware.

179 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 54.

180 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 117. There is some confusion over this particular point in interpreting Aquinas. See Karl Heim, *Christian Faith and Natural Science* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1953), 171, cited in McClendon, *Systematic Theology,* 2:185, where Hume is said (by McClendon) to pick up on the "Thomist" conception of miracle. Aquinas himself,

Calvin said that "there are as many miracles of divine power as there are kinds of things in the universe, indeed, as there are things either great or small."[181] (This is undoubtedly heresy to the authors of *Theistic Evolution*.) And where "carnal reason ascribes all such happenings to chance," Calvin continues in *The Institutes,* Christians "will look further afield for a cause and will consider that all events are governed by God's secret plan."[182] But *how* exactly does this work? Calvin's answer likely will not satisfy the modern mind's lust for knowledge and certainty: "His wonderful method of governing the universe is rightly called an abyss."[183]

Placher's final conclusion is that

> For Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, and many other premodern Christian theologians, God's transcendence was not "contrastive." Emphasizing God's transcendence did not make God less immanent. On the contrary, the wholly other God, precisely because of a radical transcendence, could also be most present to all of creatures. Since God was not one of the things in the world, it makes no sense to locate God in one place, with creatures in another, such that one could ask about the distance between them. Since God was not one agent among others, but operated on a different level of agency, it makes no sense to ask which things God had done and which things had been done by someone or something else. At the beginning of the modern era, however, theologians began to worry about just where to put God in the universe.[184]

Many contemporary theologians agree. For instance, David Hart, the classical theist and Eastern Orthodox philosopher, contends that

> it would have offended against many Christian philosophers' understanding of divine transcendence to imagine that God really made the world through a succession of cosmic interventions: they assumed that God's creative act is eternal, not temporal, occurring not a discrete instant in the past, but rather pervading all of time.[185]

Indeed, in contrast to the supposedly "traditional Christian metaphysic" of *Theistic*

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however, seems to have put the primary emphasis on knowledge in his own definition: "a miracle is so called as being full of wonder, as having a cause absolutely hidden from all: and this cause is God. Wherefore those things which God does outside those causes which we know, are called miracles." Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa of the Summa,* ed. Peter Kreeft (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990), 239.

181 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 135.
182 Cited in Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 117.
183 Cited in Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 117–18.
184 Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence*, 8.
185 Hart, *The Experience of God,* 25–26.

Evolution, "all the classical theological arguments regarding the order of the world assume just the opposite: that God's creative power can be seen in the rational coherence of nature as a perfect whole; that the universe was not simply a factitious product of a supreme intellect, but the unfolding of an omnipresent divine wisdom or logos."[186]

Regularities Reveal God's Glory as Much as Irregularities

A fifth problem with the view of divine action in *Theistic Evolution* is the assertion that God's glory, wisdom, power, etc., is primarily seen in the extraordinary (i.e., "miracles"). On the contrary, Christian theology has always located God's revelation and attributes in "the things that have been made" (Rom 1:20)—such as "ordinary" stars in the sky, the changing of seasons, "the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock" (Prov 30:19a), chemistry, music, the laws of logic and math, indeed, our very existence. The entire spectrum of human experience— from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from "special" to "general" revelation, point to God. If God truly created *everything*, this would hardly be a surprise.[187]

But, as already noted above, a modern critique of evolutionary creation requires compartmentalization; special status must be attributed to the categories of "divine intervention" and "miracles." "For the most part," Axe writes, "people appeal to supernatural explanations only when they've become convinced that there *cannot* be a natural explanation . . . we acknowledge the real possibilities of being confronted by God's activity *over and above* his role as the sustainer of the created order" (102). "Moreover," he continues, "God himself seems to endorse this perspective by using miracles both to reveal his specific will and to demonstrate his authority over the created order" (103).

In response, this perspective (as noted above) comes from a dualistic metaphysic that is problematic to begin with. The supernatural/natural construct is not fundamentally Christian, but modern. And while it may approximate something of human experience, its simplistic, binary orientation—along with a dozen other problems we can't cover here—make it difficult to accept.

Second of all, there is no question that (for example) Yahweh and Jesus perform all kinds of signs, wonders, and mighty acts that do, in fact, lead people to believe and have (further) knowledge of God. But, in Jesus' case, many of these are specific to his messianic task (first-century monotheistic Jews had a particular hurdle to get over in drawing the line from Yahweh to Jesus of Nazareth). Certain

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186 Hart, *The Experience of God* 38. Thus, "[i]n Christian theology there is no 'two-tier' universe that one can split into the 'designed' portion and the 'undesigned' portion" (Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 109).

187 Cf. Alexander and White, *Science, Faith, and Ethics,* 20: "If God is the creator of all that is, then there is nothing that a scientist can describe that is not created by God."

signs, wonders, and mighty deeds were helpful in that regard.[188] With respect to the more general signs and wonders (before and after the Christ-event), as Placher notes, these are more of *reminders* about God's work and presence. Whether or not water flowed from a rock during Israel's desert wandering, they knew God was there working. Yes, sometimes an "intervention" or "act of God" (a well-placed irregularity) is necessary to rejuvenate a person's faith,[189] but for the one who genuinely trusts God, it usually isn't necessary at all.

Third, there is a false dichotomy hidden in Axe's argument, namely, the dichotomy between (a) modern, supernatural miracles/interventions (according to ID theorists) and (b) God as generic sustainer of created order. One does not have to adopt (a) if it can be shown that (b) is inadequate/incomplete. ID theorists like Axe constantly see evolutionary creationists as deists because ID advocates can't imagine how God is truly acting if not via a "supernatural miracle." But, as I have labored to show, that would be the fault of ID theorists (not evolutionary creationists) for having a strongly modern and theologically unsound perspective on God and creation.

Conclusion

There are many more aspects of divine action that have not been addressed—such as causation (which should be revisited),[190] other models (e.g., econometric)[191] and

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188 This is not to suggest that this was their only purpose. It can easily be argued that the marvelous work done by Jesus must continue in the life of the church (just as it did in Acts and thereafter)—and not just for further vindication that Jesus was the Christ, but that it says something about God (e.g., God is restoring the world, intends to heal creation, etc.). A full picture of this in action throughout church history does not easily fit the superficial "confrontational" and "non-confrontational" paradigm of Axe.

189 I am witness to at least one of those occasions in my personal journey and know many other Christians who have had similar experiences.

190 E.g., one might expand or update Aristotle's in light of all the new disciplines; the same event can have a "physical cause," "biological cause," "economic cause," "psychological cause," "social cause," "religious cause," and "theological cause," all without being in competition. Moltmann goes as far as to say "it is advisable to eliminate the concept of causality from the doctrine of creation, and indeed we have to stop thinking in terms of causes at all. . . . Creating the world is something different from causing it" (Jürgen Moltmann, *God and Creation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985], 14).

191 "Miracles" can be conceived as not only perceived irregularities, but *improbable events with narrative significance.* If one was, for example, to aggregate all of the universe's events onto a single frequency distribution (i.e., bell curve), the two-tails would exhibit the more "miraculous" and the center, high-frequency events "ordinary." In this simple model, on the very far end of one tail would be the creation of the world and on the other (say) the resurrection of Jesus. The plagues of Egypt and fall of Jerusalem within the generation of Jesus' disciples a little further up, scoring a full-court basketball shot further up, until eventually one approaches the most frequent and quotidian events. Licona in *The Resurrection of Jesus* does not discuss this option in his interaction with Hume, nor does Alexander in *Rebuilding the Matrix*. Robert Larmer, *The Legitimacy of Miracle* (Lanham: Lexington, 2013), 3, approximates it in the first part of his narrow definition ("a miracle is an unusual and religiously significant event which reveals and furthers God's purposes, is beyond the power of physical nature to produce, and is caused by an agent who transcends

challenges of "miracles,"[192] more issues regarding language,[193] and the like. But it's time to draw this review to a close.

There are serious questions as to whether a book like *Theistic Evolution* will persuade more "fence-sitters" toward the perspective of the contributors, or away from it. If even half of what has been observed in this review is accurate, then there are good reasons to doubt the basic premises of the creationist-ID model—especially regarding its "case closed" disposition. As I noted in the beginning, no perspective has all the answers and there is still plenty to be learned.

However, what has also emerged from this review is that the deficiencies of the most recent evolutionary creation perspectives are not those identified by its most prominent critics. The issues are not the broad, sweeping claims about how evolutionary creation undermines cardinal doctrines, threatens the viability of Christianity, and accommodates to secular, atheistic philosophies. Instead, the problems appear to be more marginal and linguistic in nature, not having yet plumbed the debts of rich theological resources, and the need to adjust various angles of interpretation on one topic or another. Ironically, the real biblical-theological

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physical nature"), but is still entrapped in the language of modern thought and stale models of western monotheism.

192 It doesn't seem as if evolutionary creationists *or* their critics have fully rid themselves of the "god of the gaps" dilemma so long as either (a) "miracles" are viewed as a binary category or (b) some miracles (e.g., incarnation, resurrection, etc.) are given categorical, metaphysical prominence over others (e.g., water being turned into wine, the feeding of the 5,000, etc.). As already noted above by Placher, this is inevitable in one sense, but potentially problematic on another—for there is a right and wrong way to speak of such events/signs/marvels. As a case in point, Collins says that for "creation, exodus, virgin birth, resurrection of Jesus" it "would be incorrect and misleading to insist that only natural factors are valid for describing what happened in those events; it would also be empirically inadequate" (669). Similarly, in the aforementioned Biologos email on miracles, we read that "The more we know about the processes of decay that set in after death, the less likely it appears that Jesus could have risen from the dead by any natural means. Rather, science strengthens the case that if Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, the event must have occurred without, above, or against his ordinary providential working." Here, both evolutionary creationists and ID theorists make more or less the same argument: our current knowledge of the "natural" world shows that x, y, and z (fill in the blank) couldn't possibly have happened. To Biologos' credit, the contrast provided is not one of natural mechanism vs. "God's intervention" but what is "not ordinary," wisely leaving room for interpretation. As noted in McClendon, *Systematic Theology,* 2:187, "the great historic signs ['miracles'] cannot be located by the test of 'breaking' natural law." Collins, however, especially in grouping the exodus with the incarnation and resurrection (since east winds and locust plagues seem rather "natural") in a "*lacunae ignorantiae causā"* (gaps due to ignorance) vs. "*lacunae naturae causā"* (gaps due to nature) reductionist dualism, is in a much more problematic situation.

193 For example, Keener, *Miracles,* 1:184–85, notes: "Scientific language is adequate (and designed) for depicting natural phenomena, but we employ a different order of language to describe human relationships . . . Human experience necessitates metaphysical as well as scientific language; the languages describe different aspects of existence and are not intrinsically contradictory. . . . 'The so-called conflict between science and miracles,' Ian Ramsey observes, 'is a pseudo-conflict which only arises when complete adequacy is claimed for the language of science.'" This is an important observation, but even this is an oversimplification: scientific language is not simply pitted against "metaphysical language" (another modernist dualism); rather, there is a *plurality of discourses* throughout human knowledge and experience (e.g., economic, ethical, social, religious, etc.).

problems lie at the feet of those who claim a monopoly on God's truth and church tradition—along with immunity from the Enlightenment's most intoxicating ideas. The modern creationist movement and its pairing with Intelligent Design is by all means a product of its time and must be treated as such. In the end, this critique of evolutionary creation "should be abandoned or substantially modified even by proponents of ID."[194]

However, sometimes the instincts and worship of the church—not intellectual argument—is the best indicator of sound theology. Liturgies in particular can be faithful carriers of such a tradition (that is, after all, why they exist). And, as providence had it, the same week I began this article, the following liturgy was given at church, and that is how this article will close:

(Inspired by Psalm 111)

One: By this I have known the presence of the Lord.

All: in the rising of the sun, in the smile of another's face

One: in the touch of a hand or the sound of a laugh

All: in the scent of a flower holding the promise of Spring

One: By this I have known the power of the Lord:

All: in the healing of hurts, in the forgiveness of sin,

One: in the giving of gifts beyond all expectation

All: in the shower of love that comes from God's Son

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord with all of our heart!

All: Let us worship our God, whose presence and power endures forever![195]

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194 Erkki Vesa Rope Kojoven, "Tensions in Intelligent Design's Critique of Theistic Evolution," *Zygon: A Journal of Religion and Science 48* (May 2013):251–73. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:146, is less generous: "those who have turned to science for help on divine action would not be seen dead supporting the Intelligent Design Movement."

195 Cf. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action,* 1:85: "The kind of theism that really matters to the theologian involves a rich narrative of the activity of God in creation, in Israel, in Jesus Christ, in our own lives, in the church, and in the future. This is not the kind of claim that can be picked up and adjudicated by taking each item and testing it . . . according to some common epistemic measure . . . our own understanding of divine action may depend on our own engagement with divine reality."

The Religious Lie and the Grace of Revelation: A Comparative Analysis of René Girard and Karl Barth on Religion and Violence

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Abstract

Many theologians have noted the strong parallels between René Girard's mimetic theory and the critique of religion laid out by Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*; however, their conclusions are reached by means of opposing methodologies. As a result, their solutions to the problem of violence take on a different character for the Church. Notwithstanding Girard never wrote directly to matters of ecclesiology, his work can be a useful aid in the Church's call to be peacemakers. This essay seeks to pull together the similarities and differences between the two respected approaches with the intention of demonstrating the positive application mimetic theory can have when incorporated into a more robust theology. Mimetic theory is insufficiently equipped for this task on its own, but there is much we can learn from Girard. While Barth may not offer Christians a system for preventing religious violence, he rightly emphasizes a turn to the God of revelation who speaks bindingly to each and every human situation. By doing so, he is better able to incorporate the Christian response to the Holy Spirit in times of impending violence that may be overlooked by mimetic theory.

There is no unanimous definition of religion, but however it is understood, it has often been seen as inherently divisive and violent. As William Cavanaugh says, "that religion has a tendency to promote violence . . . is . . . the conventional wisdom of Western societies."[1] He notes Martin Marty's description that religion involves the focus of our ultimate concern, and in this way, it is a lot like politics. The difference, he says, is that "religion" refers not to the ritual

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1   William T Cavanaugh, "Does Religion Cause Violence?," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 35.2/3 (Spring/Summer 2007): 1.

vowing of allegiance to a flag, but only to the Jehovah's Witnesses refusal to do so. Cavanaugh argues that this sort of description shows precisely why the religious/secular dichotomy is an incoherent one. Religion ends up becoming whatever people take seriously. And if no distinction is clear—if humanity is unavoidably religious—then religion must be both the cause of, and solution to, the violence of humanity.

For René Girard and Karl Barth, humans are inherently religious beings.[2] In the simplest terms, this means for both that humanity is incapable of ridding itself of God. However, as the Apostle Paul tells us, human beings "exchanged the truth about God for a lie," and so religion became corrupted, founding itself on communal violence for Girard and the unbelief of humanity for Barth. Since Girard's entrance into theological dialogue, there has been a lumping together of these two figures for their similar critiques of religion. While there are similarities to be sure, their conclusions pertaining to the quelling of religious violence and the Christian call to be peacemakers differ dramatically as a result of their forms and methods. This essay will begin by pointing towards the similarities and differences between the two approaches with the intended purpose of retaining elements of Girard's anthropological insight that, although they will prove insufficient, are of great worth to a theological understanding of religious violence.

The "problem" of violence is itself challenging to define. One may be inclined to speak unequivocally about violence as never being good, or to say that its total elimination would be ideal. Yet it may be said with equal force that the means to putting an end to violence may, in our fallen state, call for its very use. The notion of pacifism has thus taken on various forms, each of which treat violence as something to be avoided at considerable costs, though not always completely and in all events. Perhaps one of Girard's deepest contributions here is the renewed awareness of the human capacity to move too precipitously towards a violent resolution—one that can be downplayed by the communal act, diffusing guilt across multiple participants so as to free the individual from insidious self-reproach. Yet for Girard, the answer to overcoming violence means, rightly or wrongly, the complete abandonment of its potential utility. That "violence can never be sacred" means there is little room for the "broken middle," the agony of decision in which such a contradiction is mediated. As Gillian Rose puts it, in Girard's formula, "humanity is not sinful but unenlightened," and this leads to "an attempt . . . to

2   It should be noted that Cavanaugh in fact argues that Girard undermines this distinction. This essay does not seek to dispute him; however, it will be argued that Girard does see religion as both the cause of, and solution to, violent humanity. See, William T Cavanaugh, "Girard and the Myth of Religious Violence," in *Does Religion Cause Violence?: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Violence and Religion in the Modern World*, ed. Joel Hodge et al. (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

abolish the ethical instead of suspending and releasing it."[3] It prepares humanity quite readily for a legalistic pacifism that receives a resounding "No" from the cross of Christ. But the problem arises when the notion that violence is simply unjustifiable requires no further thought on behalf of the party (individual or otherwise) seeking peace in times of war, or potentially life-threatening circumstances. One might ask if any theory for the utter denial of violent action can truly prevent human beings from engaging in it? Mimetic theory thus runs into difficulty standing alone, but a theology such as Barth's may help us consider the process of discernment that occurs at this point of resistance. Without it, Girard's mimetic structure risks becoming prisoner to its own anthropological systemization, forcing, In George Hunsinger's words, a 'Pelagian' solution to the problem of violence that supersedes the moment of Revelation and becomes even ontologically inappropriate.

Barth is able to make a significant corrective to this tendency; one that is marked by his understanding of *Grenzfall,* or the "borderline case" of violent action. Here, Barth resists the urge to systematize an ethics of war, refusing the language of absolutes so as to ensure that the necessary "discernment" of God's command does not instead fall prey to an unconditional code. The content of Christian revelation presupposes "that there can be no valid generalization," and thus for Barth, the *Grenzfall* appears as the one solid principle that rejects all principles; "the general rule that there must be an exception to every rule."[4] For this reason, critics otherwise appreciative of Barth's ethics have been wary of his lack of clarity on this point. The *Grenzfall* provides no clear answer to the problem of violence, no way of knowing in advance how to respond. Yet it succeeds in integrating more fully the continued personal reflection of the living Word of God within the Church that one finds absent in Girard.

What is needed in order to fully embrace the Christian call for peacemaking is an insistence on the practice of nonviolence as a skill, honed through the idiom of the Bible and reaching its perfection in Jesus and the Church.[5] Here it is surely Barth who better accentuates this task. For Barth, the "once-and-for-all" revelation of Jesus Christ, who models our ethic of violence, is not an event so sequestered to our past so that by mere recollection we can determine our decisions regarding violence ahead of time. By emphasizing a continual participation in the here-and-now revelation of the Triune God, Barth avoids the absolutizing of a legalistic pacifism, but maintains an ethic in which we rather "prepare for peace"

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3 Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 147.1992

4 John Howard Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War, and Other Essays on Barth* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 46.

5 Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 176.

in times of war.[6] If we have been hoodwinked by a religious lie, as both Barth and Girard wish to imagine, then it is our continual participation in receiving God's revelation that allows for the unveiling of the religious disguise and grants us the power to help subdue our own primitive instinct for violence and destruction.

Mimesis

Girard's "mimetic theory" begins as a basis of insight into humanity's unalterable religious nature. In recent years, the inherently religious constitution of *anthropos* is a claim that has been met with suspicion. Less than a few decades ago, theories of secularization were immensely popular, especially in the sciences. According to Wolfgang Palaver, many considered religion to be a phenomenon of the past—one that would soon disappear with the increasing modernization of the world.[7] As the era progressed, these claims proved obsolete. Religious sentiments not only continue to rise, but even "phenomena previously subject to mere secular modes of inquiry are now being analyzed for deeper religious meaning."[8] In the twentieth century, cultural theorists began to view political movements like fascism, National socialism, Marxism, or even our own capitalist super-structures as fundamentally religious in nature. It was not "real atheism" that drove the likes of Stalin and Mao to murder countless millions in the 20th century, say the new atheists, because these were themselves deeply religious schemes all along.

To this we might agree, but, then, that is precisely the point. The religious dimension is inescapable. It cannot be shunned away, only manipulated. Humans wish to construct a god of their own resources, but according to Barth, the universality of this religious impulse is the very symptom that proves humanity is utterly incapable of ridding themselves of the true God. Likewise, Girard makes this same initial point by drawing from Alexis de Tocqueville: "Men cannot abandon their religious faith without a kind of aberration of intellect and a sort of distortion of their true nature; they are invincibly brought back to more pious sentiments. Unbelief is an accident, and faith is the only permanent state of mankind."[9]

For Girard, religion is the immovable sacred structure at the origin of culture and thus it can never be relegated to the private domain. For this reason, Girard

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6   Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2009), III/4, 452; hereafter *CD*. Barth invokes the Roman proverb, *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace, prepare for war) in order to make his corrective: *si non vis bellum, para pacem* (if you do not want war, prepare for peace).

7   Wolfgang Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 16.

8   Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 17.

9   Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve, Francis Bowen, and Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage, 1990) I:310; See also, René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 178ff.

prefaced the first edition of his book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, with the powerful epigram from Max Scheler: "*Man believes in either a God or in an idol. There is no third course open.*"[10] It is here that Girard's "mimetic theory" emerges first and foremost as a theory of religion;[11] one that offers what might best be called a "sacrificial theory of social cohesion."[12]

In the mimetic process, humans are driven by the manifestation of unspontaneous desire, roused by another who serves as a type of model. Rivalry ensues, not simply as a result of their mutual infatuation for an irreplaceable object, but as a perversion of imitation that evolves into an attempt to outstrip the model. As John Milbank puts it "the will to difference is *also* malign, and antagonistic, because it is a desire to distinguish oneself from the similar rival in some respect or another."[13]

The only way to resolve the anarchic condition is to fix upon a single victim who can be displaced as the common enemy. Through the collective murder of the scapegoat, the victim acts as the bearer of societal ills. The scapegoated victim becomes sacralised as a sacrifice, because it is by this process that the rivalry which spawned its murder supresses the cyclical pattern of untamed violence from developing. Girard calls this a "double transference." The murdered victim is symbolically relocated, because while they are the bearer of social evil, their death also restores social harmony. The "original victim no longer appears as the monstrous source of evil but is now enshrined in the symbolic form of a god."[14] It is this mystification of the socially beneficial effects of scapegoating that "constitutes the precise point of birth of religion, whose real function is to legitimate and conceal acts of founding violence. By the same token, religions are machines for the forgetting of history and the substitution of mythology."[15]

Following this model, humanized religion accomplishes peacemaking, but only through another violent act. The original source of disorder becomes the peaceful resolution, but it is a lie, a façade. Thus, religion becomes the "awe-full perpetuation of a fortuitous escape from the death trap of internecine violence, upon which protohumans stumbled when first they lynched a scapegoat."[16] It is this understanding of religion that Girard claims tricks us into justifying violence as a form of peacemaking. This is the great sin, says Girard—the idolatrous

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10 Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper, 1961), 399; *italics* original.

11 Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 15.

12 George Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God: Reflections on René Girard and Karl Barth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51.1 (1998): 62.

13 John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 396.

14 Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God," 62.

15 Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory,* 396.

16 Scott Cowdell, "Secularization Revisited: Tocqueville, Asad, Bonhoeffer, Habermas," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion*, ed. James Alison and Wolfgang Palaver (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 346.

thought "that something good could come from violence."[17] Hence a clear definition emerges: religion is the myth that violence can be sacred. It is not religion that leads to violence, but violence that leads to religion.

Girard thus comes to view religion as moving through two distinct phases: firstly in the form of mimetic idolatry, and secondly through the divine revelation of Christ that unveils this process by exposing His innocence. This is what the biblical narrative presents: "the religious system of Jesus' day served as a retardation or concealment of the gradual process of discovery and enlightenment which was working its way through the Old Testament traditions."[18] Jesus shares the same fate as his predecessors, and yet with His subsequent resurrection the founding murder loses its foundation. At minimum, His death is a resistance to sacralization. His being raised from the dead is the Father's refusal to 'accept' it as sacrifice; declaring "God's absolute non-complicity with the violence carried out by religious people in God's name."[19]

In this way there appears to be a clear bifurcation between a "false," or "archaic" religion, and a "true" sense of which Christianity (and it alone) becomes the conduit through which to unmask the murderous regression of human societies. A sort of "Christian triumphalism" emerges for this reason; one that results in a deprecation of all non-biblical religions. They must "turn to epiphanies of sacred violence to resolve social crises," and are thus powerless to break the cycle of violence on their own.[20] As a result, there has been a strong push to resist the allure of mimetic theory because of this insensitive myopia, but as Grant Kaplan notes, one should also ask themselves if such exclusivism is not the left hand of any Christian apologetic.[21]

According to Michael Kirwan, this sort of Christian exclusivism positioned Girard as "almost Barthian" according to critics.[22] Girard's analysis that Christianity is functionally antireligious echoed for many the claims of Barth's dialectical theology. And certainly, Girard is explicitly projecting the same "tension" that has been noted by dialectic theologians before him—the idea that Christianity is both a religion and the negation of religion.[23] Girard's theory raises several notable objections, but his portrayal of the "gradual process of discovery" from "archaic"

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17 René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoit Chantre*, trans. Mary Baker (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 109.
18 Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 83.
19 Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 84.
20 Leo D. Lefebure, "Mimesis, Violence and Socially Engaged Buddhism: Overture to a Dialogue," *Contagion* 3 (Spring 1996): 122.
21 Grant Kaplan, *René Girard, Unlikely Apologist: Mimetic Theory and Fundamental Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 105.
22 Lefebure, "Mimesis, Violence and Socially Engaged Buddhism," 122.
23 Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 81.

to "true" religion is the first to lack the delicate treatment of Barth. Such a view of religion may inadvertently flatten the biblical text, allowing for the Old Testament to be useful only in view of this negative affirmation.

The Yahweh of the Old Testament *is,* after all, the same God who is "father" of Jesus Christ, but, as Ephraim Radner says, "the historical contours of these names and their personal referents, in each case and in their juxtaposition, and hence the meaning they 'deliver' scripturally, are not equal."[24] The limiting of God to his revelation in Jesus Christ ends up placing the God of the Old Testament starkly in the category of an "archaic" idolatry that limits the understanding of the Triune God who also speaks in the Old Testament. Girard thus seems entrenched by a hermeneutical snare that forces talk of God into a dispensational "economy," treating the Trinity as an "unfolding" that allows for either the progressivist risks of both supersessionism and Marcionism, or worse, pits the testaments against each other as "rival Testaments."[25] When examined, this appears more prevalent in Girard's work by his willingness to posit a nonviolent God as an ontological reality despite the more wrathful depictions of God in the Old Testament.[26]

The Disharmony of Christianity and Religion in Girard and Barth

The similarities between Girard and Barth were noted by Hans Urs von Balthasar as early as 1980 in his *Theo-Drama.* According to Balthasar, religion "in Girard, as in Barth . . . must be totally corrupt."[27] This relates to what Barth was referring to when he assigned the word religion to "the human tendency to confuse Creator and creature."[28] As Joseph Mangina points out, Barth "could even use language of pathology here: religion is a disease, a sickness, a basic deformation of the human creature."[29] Barth even states outright in his opening section on religion in the *Church Dogmatics* that "religion is unbelief" and "the one great concern of godless man."[30] In fact for Barth, our blindness to the phenomena of God's revelation unfolding before us is due to the fact that we are so religiously engaged that we fool ourselves into thinking that we have been involved with God from the beginning. "The revelation of God is . . . the *hiddenness* of God in the world of human *religion.*"[31] This means that God's revelation, similarly to Girard, is

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24 Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 254.

25 Radner, *Time and the Word,* 254.

26 "The God of the Christianity isn't the violent God of archaic religion, but the non-violent God who willingly becomes a victim in order to free us from our violence." See, René Girard, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 219.

27 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Drama Theory IV: The Action*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 308.

28 Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Louisville: WJK, 2004), 14.

29 Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 14.

30 Barth, *CD* I/2, 300.

31 Barth, *CD* I/2, 282. *italics* added.

primarily an act of unveiling. God "does not confront us 'in a neutral condition,' but as *religious* people who deny that they are ungodly and contest their dependence upon God's revelation. That is, revelation 'reaches us in the attempt to know God from our standpoint,' and not 'in the activity which corresponds to it' but in our '*opposition* to it.'"[32] The echoes of this in Girard's understanding of *mythos* and the "archaic" religion formed by mimetic rivalry seem clear. But in both cases, there is a redeeming quality, firstly in Barth's justification of Religion through revelation, and secondly in Girard's notion of "good mimesis."

Girard contends that "mimetic desire, even when bad, is intrinsically good. . . . Mimetic desire is also the desire for God."[33] Yet even with this said, mimesis presents itself in Girard's early work as being almost purely violent and destructive. Barth saw the deceptiveness of religion as man baring himself against revelation by providing a substitute. Religion, and especially the Christian religion, can mutate into an imposing structure that believes *for* the Christian. It allows for a "relationship with God . . . apart from revelation," and yet, it is this framework that constitutes, and is the presupposition and criterion of, the necessary understanding of revelation.[34] That is why for Barth, "Religion is never and nowhere true as such and in itself," but it can be rescued.[35] Religion can be *saved*. The Christian religion is the true one only as it listens to the divine revelation, and there is faith in this promise: "In this faith, the presence and reality of the grace of God . . . differentiates our religion, the Christian, from all others as the true religion."[36]

It has often been wrongly contended that Barth wished to do away with Religion in all its forms. The unfortunate translation of the German word *aufhebung* as "abolish" in Barth's writing further compounded the problem. Garrett Green notes that a more accurate term, following Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* would be to employ the term "sublate," or "sublation." Green suggests that translators are best to use 'sublimation' despite its easy confusion with *Sublimierung* in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical writings.[37] Sublimation invokes its cognate: *sublime*. To make something sublime (or to "sublimate" it) means to make it better—to take something higher by channeling it through a new medium toward its apex. The following quote from Barth makes clearer sense with this translation:

> The sublimation of religion by revelation does not only have to

32 Busch, *The Great Passion*, 143, citing *CD* I/2, §*17*, 104; *italics* original.
33 René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1996), 64.
34 Barth, *CD* I/2, 289.
35 Karl Barth, *On Religion: The Revelation of God as the Sublimation of Religion*, trans. Garrett Green (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 85.
36 Barth, *CD* I/2, 327.
37 Garrett Green, *On Religion*, ix; from the Translator's Preface.

mean its negation, not only the judgement that religion is faithless-ness. Religion, even though that judgement upon it is valid, and for that very reason, can be *happily* sublimated in revelation, it can be sustained by it and rest secure within it; religion can be justified by revelation and— we must immediately add—sanctified. Revela-tion can accept religion and single it out as true religion.[38]

In this way, true religion exists in the same way that we exist as justified sinners. We do not cease to be sinners even in the fact that we are made righteous. As Barth goes on to say, "religion can *certainly* be preserved in revelation, although and in that the judgement still stands. It can be upheld by it and concealed in it."[39]

There is thus a great confluence between Girard and Barth found in that the Church must be continually reminded of the most serious of all symptoms. That "it was the Church, not the world, which crucified Christ."[40] But where Girard held that the emergence of religion was the result of rivalry and violence, Barth's insistence is that religion is the construction of Godless man to evade what the revelation of God in Christ has spoken. The decisive difference for Barth is found in that the witness of truth "does not validate to us a principle, a formal rightness, a simple agreement between our perceptions and terms," but "must be respected ever anew in concrete relationships."[41] The liberation that comes from truth itself does not happen in a single moment of recognition as it appears for Girard.[42] In this way we are *mere* witnesses to the truth that is Christ Jesus. That is, we do not possess it, nor is it ours to manipulate, and we must defend against systems that do so, even if it be not their intention. We are *dependent* on truth for its ability to open itself to us in ever new ways. Truth cannot be an "end in itself" or the object of our self-seeking.[43]

Girard may thus be correct about our drive to violence and rivalry through religiosity, but this requires more than the mere acknowledgement of our ten-dency to do so in order to oppose it. Turning from wickedness can only be over-come when the Holy Spirit, who gives us power and opens our eyes continually (Acts 1:8), sublimates the false, often violent narratives we perceive as irenic and redirects them toward the peace that is found in Christ. This is the "ineradicable contradiction" of Girard's theory, that while "acknowledging Christ's divinity . . . he is positing a theological dimension that explodes his allegedly pure

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38 Barth, *On Religion,* 85.
39 Barth, *CD* I/2, 326.
40 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E.C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 389.
41 Busch, *The Great Passion*, 148.
42 Barth, *CD*, II/1, 234.
43 Barth, *CD,* IV/3, 566ff.

scientism."[44] Thus God cannot be bound to this formula if we are to truly experience the grace of his revelation. Moreover, it is Barth's unwillingness to attribute complete non-violence to God and concomitantly to a Christian ethic on the basis of our election in Christ that separates him from Girard.

Grenzfall as the Discernment of God's Command

Despite never calling himself a pacifist, Girard's system ends with a staunch refusal to accept violence in any form, but for Barth, it was possible for there to be circumstances, albeit extraordinary or unusual ones, in which the command of God *might* require killing.[45] This is discussed in the heavily criticized section of the *Church Dogmatics* committed to war. It specifically outlines Barth's concept of *Grenzfall,* or the "borderline case" in which war may be in line with the command of God.

For Barth, all ethics of violence fall under the doctrine of God and the revolutionary treatment of Christ's election. Thus, the proper task of ethics is to interpret and bear witness to the goodness of God, who is "the commander of man," in recognition of His enacted self-revelation in the history of Jesus Christ.[46] The ethical question of "what ought we to do?" is itself a question about what Jesus has already done. But this very notion cautions Barth against forms of casuistry or universal principles. For Barth, "the Scriptures do not contain the command of God. Rather, they bear witness to the command as it was heard by those attested to in its narratives."[47] As John Howard Yoder points out, "[w]hat Barth is therefore concerned to reject is a concept of some ideal law that would allow men the freedom to decide on their own what the command of God really means. Variety in the specific commands of God is to be expected . . . because God speaks really and bindingly to each concrete decision."[48]

We are thus given no general moral doctrines or a specific system to adhere to, as one may find in Girard. Rather, the individual is to listen for the command of God and act accordingly. Hence, the emphasis on *practicing* nonviolence—that is, listening for the command of God within the situation—comes to the fore, and this, Barth believes, can only happen under the collective authority of the Church. The Church's purpose is to be "on watch to give the individual in challenging political situations guidance and direction which are not legalistic, but evangelical, plain and unequivocal, concerning the understanding and keeping of

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44 Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Drama Theory IV: The Action*, 4:308.
45 Matthew W. Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception: Revisiting Karl Barth's Ethics of War," *Modern Theology* 28.3 (July 2012): 478.
46 Barth, *CD*, III/4, 32.
47 Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception," 480.
48 Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, 52.

the command of God which is really at issue."[49] In this way, Barth creates room for the *Grenzfall,* which is, as Matthew Puffer has rightly noted, neither a command, nor an exception, but an extenuating circumstance, or context—a "borderline case" in which violent action may be warranted.[50]

Barth's primary intention is to show "that only when one misinterprets the respect for life as a principle, as a commanded will to live, does one wrongly understand the borderline case as a relaxation of God's command or as an exception."[51] Thus, within the *Grenzfall*, casuistry fails, but as Richard Hays highlights, "Barth exhorts exegesis and prayer as the means of discerning God's command. On such occasions, Barth's ethic most nearly approximates an intuitive act-deontology in which, through prayerful exegesis and reflection, individuals seek to enact an obedience that corresponds to the obedience of Jesus Christ."[52] Conversely, the problem arises that the individual never achieves certainty regarding the degree to which an action corresponds to the command of God. Every individual is nonetheless responsible for his or her own discernment of the command of God in every situation.[53]

But unlike the pacifism which seems to proceed inevitably from Girard's ontology, Barth is only willing to keep company with pacifism for "a good part of the way," because "apart from the inadvisable absolutism of its thesis, [pacifism] consists in its abstract negation of war, as if war could be understood and negated in isolation and not in relation to the so-called peace which precedes it."[54] In the end, the question of how we truly discern the command of God is left without a satisfactory answer. Yet as unclear as it may be, it allows for the integration of personal revelation, within the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to take shape in our reflection on violence in a way that Girard simply does not offer.

Girard's starting point identifies mimesis as the constitutive factor of the "Self" and the "absolute condition for the existence of humanity."[55] From here, it follows that the recognition of the death of a victim to bring peace out of violence is the first stirring of human consciousness. Therefore, one finds an anthropology suggesting that "awareness of the other and awareness of the self come about

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49 Barth, *CD*, III/4, 469.
50 Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception," 492.
51 Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception," 485. Puffer critiques Yoder specifically for his failure to appreciate the non-determinative form of the command here discussed. He proposes a convincing argument for another conflation of terms in Barth between *Grenzfall* as "borderline case" and *Ausnahme* as "exception." In some editions, both words have been translated as "exception," but this only muddies Barth's intended meaning.
52 Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception," 496, citing Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1996), 236.
53 Puffer, "Taking Exception to the Grenzfall's Reception," 490.
54 Barth, *CD*, III/4, 458.
55 Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 28.

simultaneously and as part of the same process of . . . violent desire."[56] James Alison says this lays the foundation for an anthropology of grace, giving an account of what is required of human beings to change for the better.[57] However, the anthropological thrust of the entire process places Girard closer to Karl Rahner than to Karl Barth. It is a "transcendental anthropology" where "the overcoming of sin receives little attention" and we are forced to find room for "the mediation of Jesus and the significance of his death."[58] In other words, Christ comes too late in the story—the good news is only presented in the context of this negative aspect. The story becomes primarily about our deficiency, not God's initiative.[59]

For this reason, Michael Kirwan proposes that Girard's approach be described as a theological "anthropophany"—not so much a theory or discourse about man but a shocking discovery; a wisdom that, while rational, is also brought to awareness in the Gospels by a higher, divine power. Barth, however, is a "resistance fighter" against the anthropological limitations of such post-Kantian reflections, and makes clear that "Jesus is not simply an intense expression of the common, human experience of 'God-consciousness'; nor is Christology simply anthropology writ large."[60] Anthropology can only serve as the predicate of Christology, for otherwise it is impossible for theology to reach beyond its parameters, leaving it doomed to fall short of any proper speech about God and humanity.

Girard follows this pattern. Christ is no longer the starting point, but the conclusion of a gnostic anthropology,[61] arriving in the form of a *deus ex machina* to tidy up the mess when things seem at their worst. Thus, while we must remind ourselves time and again that Girard is no theologian, the system that he presents prevents a proper emphasis on the grace of Christ as the gift that *precedes* our response.

As George Hunsinger has rightly argued, Girard's deepest insights are possible to be retained, but only with the support of a theological framework like Barth's to make up for his deficiencies. "Much will obviously need to be left behind."[62] To develop a systematic approach to the problem of religious violence in the way mimetic theory does leaves its advocates with "a 'Pelagian' solution to an

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56 James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 37.
57 Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 52.
58 Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 55.
59 Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 60; Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong*, 7ff.
60 Kevin Vanhoozer, "Human Being, Individual and Social," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 172.
61 Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 140. Kirwan makes note of several scholars who have levelled this critique. Though some have defended Girard, the claims are numerous enough to give it serious consideration.
62 Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God," 69.

inherently 'Augustinian' problem."[63] The "horizontal" becomes emphasized at the expense of the "vertical." Hence one must ask if it is so simple for the victims of brutal *injustice* (a word that Balthasar notes Girard rarely uses) to overcome their retributive emotions with the simple epiphany of the scapegoat? It is hard to imagine. Thus, Hunsinger rightly adds, "the saving significance of Jesus Christ cannot be grasped merely from the standpoint of his having endured injustice as an innocent victim at the hands of society. It can be grasped only when his death is seen as an agreement between himself and God the Father for the sake of the world."[64]

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of mimetic theory is, as Balthasar says, that it "concerns only men's attitude to the Crucified, as if God's attitude to him did not exist."[65] The critique can be levelled against Girard, but it would be problematic to think that Barth is guilty of the same. Despite the problems of clarity within Barth's *Grenzfall,* it is only in Girard's theory that we have the failure "to convey anything of the drama which is the life of the triune God." The transferal of guilt to Jesus becomes only a "psychological unloading" and the "power-less Father-God demands nothing in the nature of an 'atoning sacrifice.'"[66] Without this, Girard is stuck with a view of the cross as "solidarity" with Jesus, but he is unable to adjust his focus to see the "substitution" of Christ that Barth most certainly can. The Judge judges *in our place* and intercedes for us, says Barth. If this is not said up front, then His solidarity with us would appear to be His complicity with the wrongdoing of our sin.[67]

Girard's argument for Jesus's finality and divinity can thus only be rescued if one unites it with the idea that "the exemplary narratives of Jesus show us the 'shape,' and the concrete possibility, of a non-violent practice."[68] If, on the other hand, "Jesus's practice is only atoning by his exposure of the logic of *mimesis*" then we are certainly to be pitied.[69] Thus, it can be said of Girard that he accounts for a moralism of faith, but the strange warming of the heart that is actually capable of turning people against violence is absent where it is present in Barth. The true religion, that leads us out of violence, is a creature of *grace.*[70] And this one thing we cannot stress too strongly: the relationship of the truth of the Christian religion to the grace of its revelation.[71]

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63 Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God," 69.
64 Hunsinger, "The Politics of the Nonviolent God," 72.
65 Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Drama Theory IV: The Action*, 4:310.
66 Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Drama Theory IV: The Action*, 4:309–10.
67 Busch, *The Great Passion*, 207.
68 Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 396.
69 Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 399.
70 Barth, *On Religion*, 85.
71 Barth, *On Religion,* 53.

"The Great and First Cause of All Things": The Trinity in Henry Alline's Theology and Ministry

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Abstract

Historians acknowledge the important role the itinerant evangelist Henry Alline (1748–1784) played in the spiritual formation of the Maritime Provinces of Canada. They consider him the primary mover of Nova Scotia's First Great Awakening during the late eighteenth century. Despite his prominence in the region, outside of several surveys and brief comments, few scholars have evaluated the various facets of his theology. This article explores Alline's doctrine of the Trinity and argues that much of his theology and ministry grew out of his relational understanding of God. By focusing on his published sermons, his theological treatises, and his journal, this study shows the central role this doctrine played in Alline's interpretation of creation, redemption, and consummation. This theme was so powerful for him that it came to undergird much of his theology and ministry. I propose that many of Alline's controversial opinions find their basis ultimately in his understanding of divine community, which was rooted in his understanding of the relational nature of the three persons of God.

Historians routinely recognize the itinerant evangelist Henry Alline (1748–1784) as one of the most significant figures in the history of the Maritime Provinces of Canada.[1] Alline's ministry was the catalyst igniting the revival fires that would become Nova Scotia's First Great Awakening in the late eighteenth century. His

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1 The term "Maritimes" denotes modern-day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Alline's influence was least in the latter of these, and the two former provinces were one—the Colony of Nova Scotia—until the year of his death. As such, throughout this article, the term "Nova Scotia" refers to modern-day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as it would have been when Alline was alive. Perhaps the best analysis of Alline's impact on the spiritual climate of the Maritimes is found in the work of George Rawlyk, who contended that the Allinite "New Light-New Birth" revivalist emphasis shaped the religious contours of the region. See George Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984); and George Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Religious*

contemporaries proclaimed that he was "Nova Scotia's George Whitefield," and his grave marker declared, "He was justly esteemed the apostle of Nova Scotia."[2] Since the mid-twentieth century, Alline has been the subject of numerous critical scholarly works. This led historian David Bell to observe that Alline was "the greatest 'Canadian' of the eighteenth century, the greatest Maritimer of any age and the most significant religious figure this country has yet produced."[3]

Despite his influence in the region, outside of several peripheral comments and brief surveys, historians have afforded his theology surprisingly little attention, preferring instead to look at the long-term effects of his preaching ministry on the region. Alline's unique mysticism made him something of a theological maverick in the Maritime region, which, prior to Nova Scotia's First Great Awakening, was an uncontested Calvinistic stronghold. During a traumatic conversion experience in March 1775, Alline saw a different God—not one that *predestined* individuals to one eternity or the other, but a God that was deeply relational.[4] He claimed that at the moment of his conversion, he felt "ravished with a divine ecstasy" and "wrapped up in God."[5]

In one of the only recent studies to focus on Alline's theology, historian Kevin Flatt has shown the significant role this experience had on the development of Alline's anti-Calvinism.[6] One cannot fully understand Alline's theology without analyzing the traumatic nature of his conversion; therefore, this article follows Flatt's approach in order to further explore aspects of Alline's thought. Before Alline died in 1784, he expanded on the theology behind this divine encounter with several theological writings.[7] None of these works provides a systematized look into Alline's thought, but they offer a comprehensive look into his guiding

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Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775–1812 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 5–18.

2   On the title "Whitefield of Nova Scotia," see Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, 3 and George Rawlyk, *Wrapped up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists* (Burlington, ON: Welch, 1988), 1–31. Many historians have used this designation since Alline's death. For examples, see John G. Bourinot, *Builders of Nova Scotia: A Historical Review* (Toronto: Copp-Clark, 1900), 52, and Edward M. Saunders, *History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces* (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), 15. On Alline's tangible influence among Maritime Baptists, see the case studies in William H. Brackney with Evan L. Colford, eds., *Maritime Baptist Old First Churches: Narratives and Prospects* (Wolfville, NS: ACBAS, 2017).

3   David G. Bell, ed., *New Light Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis*, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 6 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1985), xiii.

4   On the role Alline's conversion narrative played in the development of his theology, specifically his anti-Calvinism, see Kevin Flatt, "Theological Innovation from Spiritual Experience: Henry Alline's Anti-Calvinism in Late Eighteenth-Century Nova Scotia and New England," *Journal of Religious History* 33.3 (2009), 285–300.

5   Henry Alline, *Life and Journal of the Rev. Mr. Henry Alline,* ed. James Beverley and Barry Moody, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 4 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1982), 63.

6   Flatt, "Theological Innovation," 285–300.

7   Among them, he published: (1) two major theological treatises, the first in 1781 and the second in 1783; (2) three sermons, two from late 1782 and one from early 1783; and (3) a journal, which, although not published until 1806, was in circulation in hand-copied form the same decade that he

principles. Among them, his doctrine of God—in particular, how he approached the Trinity—emerges as a significant and pervasive theme throughout his theology and ministry.

He believed the "ravishing" he had experienced during his own conversion was a taste of the love shared among the three persons of the Trinity. While it would be anachronistic to apply the "Social Trinity" label to Alline's thought, he routinely employed relational imagery in order to understand the relationship among the three persons of God.[8] In this respect, Alline's discussion of the Trinity appears at least tangentially related to that of Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173; see below); however, there is scant historical evidence to connect these two views. Further, historians have identified Alline's reliance on the theology of English mystic and non-juror William Law (1686–1761),[9] whose influence is clearly

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died. These items supplemented his many hymns, which believers sang throughout the Maritimes and New England for generations.

8 "Social Trinity" is a twentieth-century term, popularized by theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and John Zizioulas. Contrary to the Augustinian/Western view (e.g., the psychological model) that begins with the oneness of God, it follows the Cappadocian/Eastern view (e.g., *perichoresis*, the relational model) that begins with the threeness of God. Rather than viewing the persons of the Trinity as three parts of one being (which some criticize as modalism), the social view seeks to reframe the conversation by focusing on three persons in a single, loving community (which some criticize as a form of tri-theism). Moltmann described the social view as "The image of the family . . . three persons—one family." See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 199. Clark Pinnock described the social view by writing that "God is constituted by three subjects, each of whom is distinct from the others and is the subject of its own experiences in the unity of one divine life. . . . God's nature is internally complex and consists of a fellowship of three. It is the essence of God's nature to be relational. . . . God is a communion of persons, and creation is a natural expression of God's life, because finite creatures find their fulfillment in relation to God." See Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 35.

9 Alline drew almost exclusively from English instead of American writers. On these external influences, see J. M. Bumsted, *Henry Alline, 1748–1784*, Canadian Biographical Studies 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 78–89. This likely stemmed from his anti-Calvinism. The theological treatises of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards would have been abhorrent to Alline's Arminian tendencies, which meant that he did not usually borrow from their thought. Instead, he relied on figures from across the Atlantic, most notably William Law (1686–1761). Additionally, the poet John Milton (1608–1674) and the hymn writer Edward Young (1683–1765) were the tinder to Alline's spiritual songs. For a selection of his hymns, see George A. Rawlyk, ed., *New Light Letters and Songs, 1778*–1793, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 5 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1983), 183–236. On Alline's reliance on Jacob Boehme and on his writing in general, see Benne Faber, "'My Stammering Tongue and Unpolished Pen': Henry Alline's Language and Literature," *Revivals, Baptists, and George Rawlyk*, ed. Daniel C. Goodwin, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 17 (Wolfville, NS: Acadia Divinity College, 2000), 77–91.

Although his reliance on Law was inconsequential for most of his listeners, clergy contemporary with Alline raised their concerns with his "mystical" theology. Alline's chief rival in Nova Scotia, the Methodist minister William Black (1760–1834), became so concerned with Alline's growing influence that he entreated John Wesley (1703–1791) to supply a public refutation of his theology. Wesley, who had publically denounced William Law in England in 1756, recognized Alline's reliance on Law and wrote of Alline: "He is very far from being a man of sound understanding . . . he has been dabbling in Mystical writers in matters which are too high for him, far above his comprehension. I dare not waste my time upon such miserable jargon." See John Wesley to William Black, 13 July 1783, in John Telford, ed., *The Letters of Rev. John Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1931), 7:182.

visible in Alline's trinitarian thought. With these potential connections in view, this study will not dedicate significant space to the historical source of Alline's trinitarian theology. Instead, this article shows the influence his view of the Trinity had over the remainder of his theological system. By assessing Alline's theological writings, I suggest that his ministry and much of his theology grew out of his understanding of the relational Triune God. In order to demonstrate the role of his trinitarian theology, I will first assess Alline's conversion account, then his writings related to the Trinity, and finally his larger body of theological writing.

Biography

Henry Alline was born on 14 June 1748 in Newport, Rhode Island.[10] From 1758–1759—following the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755—Nova Scotia's Governor, Charles Lawrence, offered land to New Englanders who were willing to settle the once French-occupied region. Among the New England "planters" to respond to this call were William and Rebecca (née Clarke) Alline and their seven children, who eventually landed in Falmouth, in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia in 1760. As members of the Congregationalist church, the Allines were a deeply pious family who brought their faith with them to their new colony.

Influenced by his religious upbringing, the young Henry Alline's perceptions of God prior to his conversion constitute "a hard hearted and cruel being."[11] He feared the wrath of the Calvinistic God of his parents and his congregation and could not escape the feeling that he was not among God's elect and therefore was destined to an eternity in hell. As these ideas began to occupy all of Alline's thoughts, he attended weekly services and prayed daily in an effort to appease what he saw as an oppressive deity. Alline's journal depicts a tortured youth, fixated and oppressed by the image of a wrathful God—a feeling that remained with him for almost two decades, until he was nearly twenty-eight years old. This peaked for Alline when he received a vision of divine punishment. As he describes: "all on [sic] a sudden I thought I was surrounded with an uncommon light; it seemed like a blaze of fire. . . . All of this appeared as real as if it were actually so.

Indeed, Wesley's response to Alline bears striking resemblance to his criticism of Law. In 1756, for example, he wrote that Law's writing was "unintelligible jargon of the mysticks [sic]." See John Wesley, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Law, Occasioned by Some of His Late Writings* (London: n.p., 1756), 19. The fact that the Methodist leaders saw contacting John Wesley as their only viable option to stop Alline provides valuable insight into the inroads that he was making among Nova Scotians.

10 Much of what we know about Henry Alline's early life comes from his journal. Originally published in Boston in 1806, all references to Alline's journal are taken from the 1982 reprint cited in n. 5 above.

11 Alline, *Journal*, 30.

I thought I saw thousands of devils and damned spirits, by whom I expected to be tormented."[12] For weeks, this image haunted Alline.

In his distress, one evening alone in his room in March 1775, he opened his Bible to a random passage. He landed on Psalm 38: "O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger . . . . Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation" (vv. 1, 21–22, KJV). These words perfectly characterized Alline's state of mind. As he later recalled, it was as though this "was the first time I ever saw the word of God."[13] He closed his Bible and repeated the practice, this time opening to Psalm 40: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit . . . . He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (vv. 1–3, KJV). In this decisive moment, the twenty-seven-year-old transitioned from doubt to certainty—or, from his view, from death to life—as he dedicated his life to his new saviour.

This liberating instant revealed to Alline a God that he had never seen before. Ironically, although Alline would later seek to distance himself from his Calvinist contemporaries, his conversion account (written retrospectively) mirrors the style and form of those by New England Puritans.[14] The highly emotional and personal style of this genre allowed Alline to emphasize God's relational nature. As he wrote: "Attracted by the love and beauty I saw in his divine perfections, my whole soul was inexpressibly ravished with the blessed Redeemer."[15] As he later recalled in a sermon, "thro' boundless grace I adhered to the voice of the heavenly lover and cast my naked and perishing soul at his feet."[16] This was not the God of Alline's Congregationalist upbringing but rather was one that cared for his creatures and his creation. Alline's fear was replaced by comfort as he felt "filled with love and ravished with a divine ecstacy [sic]." At that moment, he "enjoyed a heaven on earth" feeling "wrapped up in God."[17] Alline's traumatic experience would inform much of his later theology and ministry.[18]

Following his conversion, Alline claimed that regularly he "conversed with God oftentimes as with an intimate friend, and feasted on his love."[19] His communion and direct access to God convinced him that he had a larger role to play, which spurred him toward itinerant ministry. Timid about his calling, he began by

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12 Alline, *Journal*, 47.
13 Alline, *Journal*, 61.
14 Bumsted, *Henry Alline*, 31–35. Bumsted provides a succinct typology on p. 33.
15 Alline, *Journal*, 62.
16 Henry Alline, "Sermon Preached to, and at the Request, of a Religious Society of Young Men, 19th November, 1782," *The Sermons of Henry Alline*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 7 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1986), 67.
17 Alline, *Journal*, 63.
18 Flatt, "Theological Innovation," 285–300.
19 Alline, *Journal*, 67.

speaking to his peers about his conversion. Among them was his brother-in-law, John Payzant (1749–1834). Confused by Alline's testimony, Payzant asked if it was possible to receive salvation without realizing it. Alline responded by observing that the love of God was so powerful that it was impossible to be unaware of one's conversion. Convicted by this message, Payzant underwent a powerful conversion experience the next day. As Alline wrote: "Thus the glorious work of God began to spread in that dark land."[20] This experience confirmed for him his calling as a preacher of the gospel. After a brief internal struggle over his lack of formal education, he began his public ministry in April 1776.

He travelled by horseback throughout Nova Scotia, particularly in the Annapolis Valley, and preached in different communities each day—usually more than once and often for hours at a time. One early Baptist historian described him with the observation: "In him were the elements of the poet, the musician, the adventurer and the leader . . . . No one in the community could tell a story, sing a song, or dance like Henry Alline."[21] He took only brief periods of rest before he would "labour again for twelve hours in discoursing praying, preaching and exhorting."[22] His seemingly unlimited stamina paired with his calling to bring light to a "dark land."

George Rawlyk wrote that Alline "had a tremendous appeal during and after the American War of Independence for those North Americans who were particularly confused and disoriented by the powerful divisive forces unleashed by the revolution."[23] He preached emotional messages, laden with relatable imagery. At the conclusion of each of his services, he left room for the Spirit to move within his audience. This often took the form of screams and shouts of joy, spectacles of public prayer and exhortation, and occasionally resulted in prophetic messages. A staple of Alline's ministry was its inclusion of women and children. At his meetings, it was not uncommon for a woman to preach in exhortation or for a child to publicly entreat his or her parents to repent.[24] Ultimately, through these emotional services, Alline had hoped to introduce his audience to the loving God he had met during his conversion.

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20 Alline, *Journal*, 68. Interestingly, Payzant gives a slightly different account of his conversion in his own published journal. Instead, Payzant describes his conversion in a manner similar to Alline's conversion. See John Payzant, *The Journal of John Payzant (1749–1834)*, ed. Brian C. Cuthbertson, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 3 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1981), 19. Rawlyk has observed that Alline's conversion narrative became paradigmatic throughout the region—this is demonstrated well in Payzant's narrative. See Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 5–18.

21 Saunders, *History of the Baptists*, 16.

22 Alline, *Journal*, 87.

23 Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 12.

24 Rawlyk, *Wrapped up in God*, 51–52; P. Lorraine Coops, "That Still Small Voice: The Allinite Legacy and Maritime Baptist Women," in *Revivals, Baptists, and George Rawlyk*, ed. Daniel C. Goodwin, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 17 (Wolfville, NS: Acadia Divinity College, 2000), 113–31.

"The Great and First Cause of all Things"

The most concentrated writing that Alline dedicated to discovering the nature of this loving Triune God is found in the second chapter of his second major theological work, *A Court for the Trial of the Anti-Traditionalist*, entitled "On the Deity: The Great and First Cause of all Things."[25] In his basic schema, he observed that God is three: "Life, Wisdom and Glory [are] called in divine Revelation the Father, Word, and Spirit." In this paradigm, he depicted the Father as the "Source of Life" and the "Fountain of Wisdom and Glory," meaning specifically the "fountain" of the Son and the Spirit.[26] It is possible that the Father's status as the source of Life refers to God's activity in creation. However, when viewed next to his comment of the Father as the "fountain" of the other two divine persons, it delineates Alline's view of a procession, as he suggested further that they proceed "from or of [the Father]."[27]

From Alline's view, the doctrine of the Trinity was so central that he vociferously defended it against those who denied it. In his sermons, Alline warned especially against "Arians and Socinians," which were labels he used broadly to talk about Unitarians.[28] At the time of the American War of Independence, in his native New England, various pockets of Anglicans and Congregationalists rejected the Trinity as irrational.[29] Disturbed by what he considered a betrayal of orthodoxy within his own faith community, Alline offered a brief response. First, he argued that Christianity without a Trinity was illogical. He posed the rhetorical question, "was God punishing himself to satisfy himself?" Second, and more repugnant to Alline, was the image Unitarianism painted of God. For Alline, the only conceivable way to construct a theology devoid of the Trinity was to focus on God's divine wrath. In other words, it was, paradoxically, "a God enraged" with

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25 Published originally in Halifax in 1783, all quotations are from George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Henry Alline: Selected Writings*, Sources of American Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 209–71, cited as Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist."

26 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 211–12. Here, he cites 1 John 5:7, which also renders Jesus as "Word" and closes with: "these three are one" (KJV).

27 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 212. Alline reflects some Augustinian vocabulary in his writing; however, it is inconsistent. While Alline adds that the Son and the Spirit proceed "from or of" the Fountain, this connection is ambiguous. He does not, for example, observe the *filioque*, nor does he make an effort to discuss order or hierarchy. Moreover, of the five characteristics in theologian Steven M. Studebaker's rubric on the mutual love model, the only solid link Alline's doctrine of the Trinity has with the Augustinian tradition is his view of the Father as the "fountain" of divinity. See Steven M. Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Perspectives on Philosophy and Religious Thought 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008), 111.

28 Alline's diatribe against these two bodies may reflect his reliance on William Law. While he used these terms to talk broadly about Unitarianism, it is possible he adopted them from Law's *An Appeal to All That Doubt, or Disbelieve the Truths of the Gospel, Whether they be Deists, Arians, Socinians, or Nominal Christians* (London: W. Innys and J. Richardson, 1740).

29 Conrad Wright, *The Unitarian Controversy: Essays on American Unitarian Controversy* (Boston: Skinner House, 1994).

himself. Brought to its natural conclusion, Alline could only see a God characterized by "misery."[30] Interestingly, against his anti-Unitarian backdrop, Alline offered a criticism that might have equally applied to his Calvinist detractors. Implicitly he wished to pose a question to his listeners that stood at the center of his theology: was God a god of wrath or of love? For Alline, the prevailing Calvinist interpretation of the cross too significantly differentiated between the Father and the Son, and implied that "Christ has more love than the Father."[31] In an effort to correct his region's theological course, he offered an alternative view of God.

While Alline upheld the individuality of the divine persons, his primary interest was their relation with one another. At the crux of his examination of the Trinity, Alline employed a slew of relational images to describe how the divine persons relate to one another: "being in themselves so attractingly [sic] glorious [they] are ravished one with the other . . . naturally attracted [and] centering themselves in love one with the other, [God is] married to himself in love with himself."[32] In Alline's attempt to portray the "ravishing" love of God, he employs often salacious—occasionally bordering on erotic—imagery.[33] Notably, Alline was not concerned with explaining the logic behind how the persons of the Trinity interact (such as Richard of St. Victor's perfect goodness or Augustine's psychological analogy). Instead, he was interested in articulating to his readers the source of the loving divine nature he had experienced personally.

For Alline, the "ravishing" divine love was so immense and perfect that it could not be contained within the three persons of the Trinity and therefore had overflowed into creation. Alline identified the Triune God as the "source of all goodness" and as the "cause of every communication of love."[34] It is likely that he adopted these expressions from William Law (1686–1761). Much like Alline, Law found Calvinism intolerable and entirely incompatible with the basic idea that God is love. Significantly, in Law's work, *The Spirit of Love*, he refers to the Trinity as an "Abyss of universal Love . . . a Triune Infinity of Love and Goodness."[35]

Although Alline would have been unfamiliar with Law's source, it is possible that Law in turn had drawn from Richard of St. Victor, who understood God as the perfection of goodness, the highest form of which was love. These ideas also

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30   Alline, "A Sermon to Young Men," 51–53.

31   James Beverley and Barry Moody, "Introduction," *The Journal of Henry Alline*, ed. James Beverley and Barry Moody, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 4 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1982), 20.

32   Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 212.

33   Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 12.

34   Henry Alline, "A Sermon on a Day of Thanksgiving Preached at Liverpool, 21st November, 1782," *The Sermons of Henry Alline*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 7 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1986), 81. He appears to use "goodness" and "love" interchangeably.

35   William Law, *The Spirit of Love, Part II* (London: M. Richardson, 1754), 423.

seem to echo Jonathan Edwards's view of God's love as a self-communication of divine goodness.[36] Standing in this tradition and drawing on Law verbatim, Alline wrote: "the *infinite Love and Goodness* that was in himself, [is] breaking forth like itself."[37] Similarly, on a different occasion, he remarked that the "ecstasy" the believer experienced during conversion was evidence of "the natural product of that infinite over-flowing . . . uncontainable goodness."[38] The Triune God's "infinite" and perfect goodness emanated forth into the world and provided believers with that "ravishing" that Alline had experienced.

The notion of entering into the Trinity's love represented one of Alline's most pervasive theological images: one must choose whether to be wed to the world or to God. He routinely used the imagery of being "married to your fallen state," which ultimately contrasted with God's infinite love.[39] He encouraged listeners, "divorce your minds from every other lover, and espouse you [sic] to this Husband."[40] Alline compared the joy of conversion and entering into God's "overflowing fountain" of love with the provocative image of the infatuation of two lovers: "their breast thro their Bosom burn, and their Hearts dissolving in Love, unite as one, while their souls swoon (as it were) away with the Raptures of Joy at the happy meeting, and knowledge of each other."[41] Indeed, for Alline, conversion—wherein the individual experienced the overflowing love of the Trinity—was nothing less than entering into community with God: the believer "dissolves" in the "ravishing" love of the Triune God, and, significantly, they "unite as one."

The perfection of goodness in the divine essence, wrote Alline, meant that God "cannot possibly receive any injury or benefit" from human actions.[42] For Alline, God's nature was unchangeable because what is perfect cannot be altered negatively or positively. As he understood, God is "eternally unchangeably happy in & of himself; wholly independent & excluded from any possibility of change, sorrow or loss."[43] This brought Alline to conclude that God cannot "be glorified by receiving" love but instead could only be glorified by "giving" love. The love experienced by the believer, therefore, is that which originated from the Triune God. He taught that human adoration makes no contribution to divine glory:

> whatever is done by this goodness is by no means to add to the
> glory, or bring something to the goodness and grandeur, but wholly

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36 Studebaker, *Jonathan Edwards' Social Augustinian Trinitarianism*, 136–39.
37 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 216; emphasis mine.
38 Alline, "A Sermon on Thanksgiving," 81.
39 Alline, "A Sermon to Young Men," 69.
40 Alline, "A Sermon on Thanksgiving," 85.
41 Henry Alline, "A Sermon Preached on the 19th of Feb. 1783 at Fort-Midway," *The Sermons of Henry Alline*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 7 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1986), 134.
42 Alline, "A Sermon on Thanksgiving," 83.
43 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 212.

> display that love and manifest that goodness which was already
> existing in God, and thereby not to receive happiness or glory, but
> to display happiness and glory.[44]

Alline's assertion here reveals that his belief in God's relationality, at least in respect to God's creation, was on some level unilateral. This unilaterality in God's relationship to creation is a reflection of the perfection Alline saw in the divine nature. As Alline reasoned, God receives love by giving love.

"The Triune Life"

Alline's emphasis on relationship in his Trinitarian theology bled into his cosmology and created one of his most controversial opinions, which became known as his "Out-birth" thesis. According to Alline, at the moment of creation, all humanity existed in communion with God as an eternal spiritual collective. So important was Alline's view of divine community that he could not picture creation outside of what he considered a natural starting point: in God's embrace. As he observed, because God's "Offspring" (humans) were made in his "likeness" (Gen 1:26), it meant that they shared "of his Nature and all his Perfections."[45] All of humanity existed in "one uninterrupted Relation harmonizing thro' the whole."[46] Before the fall, this spiritual collective existed in union with God. Writing the same year as Alline's death, the religious historian Hannah Adams observed the effectiveness of this image in Alline's ministry: "He has had such influence over his followers, that some of them pretend to remember their being in the garden of Eden."[47]

Despite this idyllic existence, Alline believed that God's perfect goodness urged him to grant his creation free will, which humanity ultimately used to disobey him. At the moment of the fall, humanity's spiritual existence became material, and humans took their earthly form—a transition he called the "Out-birth."[48] It appears Alline lifted the term "Out-birth" directly from Law, who

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44 Alline, "A Sermon on Thanksgiving," 83.

45 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 223. Interestingly, Alline believed that God's infinite nature meant that "it is impossible for any thing to be made out of nothing." He added further that "if God made them out of nothing, they may all return to nothing again: for it is self evident that whatever comes from nothing may by the same rule return to nothing." Alline's denial of creation *ex nihilo* here serves to highlight his commitment to divine community: for him, it was obvious that the spiritual collective that formed humanity in the early stages of creation was literally derived from God's own being. See Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 221.

46 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 225.

47 Hannah Adams, *An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects Which Have Appeared in the World from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Present Day* (Boston: Bedes and Sons, 1784), lxv. Adams also provides a clear summary of Alline's unique belief, writing: "He says that the souls of all the human race are emanations, or rather parts of the one Great Spirit . . . they were all present with our first parents in Eden, and were actual in the first transgression." Adams, *An Alphabetical Compendium*, lxiv–lxv.

48 His "out-birth" thesis smacks of Platonism. In particular, both systems emphasize human embodiment in conjunction with loss of innocence (or excellence, in the latter view). If Alline's writing

wrote: "Heaven itself is Nothing else but the first glorious Out-birth, the Majestic Manifestation, the beatific Visibility, of one God in Trinity; Therefore all temporary Nature is a Product, Offspring, or Out-birth of Eternal Nature."[49] Indeed, according to Law, from whom Alline drew inspiration, everything came from the Trinity. For humans, the fall, or "Out-birth," detached created beings from the divine nature. Humanity's disobedience "separated the Male and Female," who had previously existed genderless as one being.[50] The fall, ultimately, was a separation from community: (1) separation from the Triune God; (2) separation from the spiritual collective; and (3) separation between male and female.

This separation, argued Alline, would be reversed in the new creation, when Christians would again enter into an eternal spiritual community with one another and the Triune God. As Adams aptly described Alline's view: "when the original number of souls have had their course on earth, they will all receive their reward or punishment in their original unembodied state."[51] While now divided into separate persons, in the eschaton believers would become an "innumerable crowd of adorers standing as one in divine Union and Glory . . . to bask in the boundless Ocean of their Father's Love and Perfections."[52] Interestingly, here Alline locates the Father as the source of love. This is either a reflection of Alline's lackadaisical use of language regarding the divine persons,[53] or, more likely, is a reflection of his understanding of the divine procession. Regardless, from Alline's perspective, entering into "union" with the Father, and thereby the Trinity, would be the believers' prize in the new creation.

Perhaps most significantly, Alline used the phrase the "Triune Life" to refer to the community that humanity experienced in its pre-fallen spiritual state and to

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resembles Platonism, it is likely because of his reliance on Law. Although Law was not himself among the Cambridge Platonists, he was a fellow at Emmanuel College in Cambridge in the early eighteenth century, where he likely felt their influence.

49 Law, *An Appeal*, 6:115–16. As cited in Faber, "My Stammering Tongue and Unpolished Pen," 80.

50 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 223–25. Cf. Henry Alline, "Two Mites," in *Henry Alline: Selected Writings*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk, Sources of American Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 188–89. Alline provides little explanation for the structure of the biblical text, which clearly places the creation of Eve *before* the fall. He is obviously aware of this tension, as he briefly addresses it in a later chapter, but offers only that humanity's spiritual being was in a state of "falling" and "disorder" before the separation of male and female. In this way, Alline suggests that the fall was a process, but that eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was the final event that cleaved the spiritual collective into a "separate corporeal state." See Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 238.

51 Adams, *An Alphabetical Compendium*, lxv.

52 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 225. See also, Alline, "A Sermon on Thanksgiving," 84.

53 Alline seemingly uses the divine persons interchangeably (indeed, it is rare that he applies specific functions to a person of the Trinity). In this spirit, one might also observe that he is occasionally careless with the terms he uses. For example, on one occasion, Alline curiously refers to God as "the Triune Father." See Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 237. While it is possible that this was intended as a theological statement (e.g., the Father as the Fountain of Divinity), in light of the crude form of much of his writing, it is not probable.

which humans will return after the final judgment. When humanity fell from their spiritual collective, they "broke up" with the "Triune Life" and entered instead into an existence of "war and torment."[54] But when believers enter into Christ's redeeming power, they are "brought back to be one with God partaking again of that Triune Life."[55] The fall ultimately removed humans from community with the divine—a process that Christ, with his immense love, reversed. Drawing on John 17:22, Alline maintained that through this redeeming grace, humans might enter into their pre-corporeal state and be one with God in the same way that the Son and the Father are one. Redemptive grace, Alline wrote, was merely a product of the love that the "Father-Son-Spirit waits to give."[56] Alline wrote: "if you are redeemed to God, . . . in Time, you will awake *with God, in God, and like God*."[57] The promise of the future was a reawakening of the "Triune Life," when believers would exist in a community so tightly interwoven with God that they would return to their created spiritual existence.

Alline emphasized the relational nature of the Triune God up until he died in early 1784. Hoping to preach one final circuit among the emerging Arminian Baptists throughout New England,[58] a frail Alline travelled to Newbury Port, New Hampshire, where he met a local Congregationalist minister. On 26 January, he preached a sermon, and 24 hours later, he was on his deathbed. Now ravaged by tuberculosis, the same man who eight years earlier feared death now proclaimed, "I long for it, I long for it." Finally, on 2 February, the 35-yeared old "breath'd his soul into the arms of Jesus with whom he long'd to be."[59]

Evaluation

Today, Alline is remembered primarily for his posture toward the ministry, his captivating leadership, and his oratorical abilities, rather than for the specifics of his theology. While recognizing evangelicalism's indebtedness to Alline for the spiritual vitality of the region, Christian interpreters since Alline's death have been unsure what to do with his theology. In 1813, for example, one Baptist writer observed that Alline "plunged into some speculations on theological points, which he could not have fully understood," continuing with the observation that "[h]ad

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54 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 237.
55 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 239.
56 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 258.
57 Alline, "Anti-Traditionalist," 266; emphasis mine.
58 On Alline's later influence on Benjamin Randall and the New England Freewill Baptists, see Scott Bryant, *The Awakening of the Freewill Baptists: Benjamin Randall and the Founding of an American Religious Tradition* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011), 141ff. Cf. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, 37–69.
59 David McClure to William Alline, 29 April 1784, in Rawlyk, *New Light Letters and Songs,* 263–65. Alline's followers appended this letter to his journal in their circulated form in an effort to supply a concluding narrative to Alline's life.

he lived to have maturely reviewed his system, he would probably have pruned it of many of its exceptionable parts."[60] One of the early Maritime Baptist historians characterized his theology as "crude and unsatisfactory."[61] Similarly, one modern historian, commenting specifically on Alline's cosmology, noted simply that he "had some unusual views."[62]

While he may have espoused some "unusual" doctrines, they were rooted in his understanding of divine community—which was ultimately the same relationship that the believer experienced at the moment of conversion. For Alline, these matters of theology were not some distant academic exercises but rather were truths that had been made tangible to him. He saw a relational God and, in the wake of his conversion, he routinely "feasted on his love."[63] This became the starting point for his theology, and anything he wrote subsequently had to accommodate the overflowing love of the Triune God, with whom he had personally interacted. He hoped, ultimately, to communicate this truth to a wide audience. In this respect, his theology was developed to be thoroughly practical, which perhaps accounts for the lack of depth or the ambiguity in his theological analyses.

The relational imagery that Alline employed proved a useful tool in reaching the spiritually despondent Nova Scotians. At the core of his ministry, he sought to correct the deficiencies he saw in Nova Scotia's Calvinistic theological consensus. From his own experience, Alline knew what had set him free from what he perceived as Calvinism's icy grip: witnessing a relational, loving God.[64] Indeed, Alline's own conversion became a template for how he conducted his ministry in Nova Scotia, and he hoped to recreate this experience all across the colony—and, as Rawlyk has argued, it became the "paradigm" for evangelical spirituality throughout the Maritimes into the nineteenth century.[65] For Alline, liberal use of these relational themes in his sermons and writings was the antidote to what he considered the repressive Calvinism that, to that point, had free reign in Nova Scotia. Moreover, if Alline's ministry was especially successful because of its relief to a colony on edge from the American War of Independence,[66] it is likely that his relational imagery played a significant role. For an audience feeling emotionally weary, which image might serve to most effectively communicate

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60 David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1813), 284.
61 I. E. Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (St. John, NB: Barnes, 1880), 13.
62 Frederick C. Burnett, *Biographical Directory of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Free Baptist Ministers and Preachers*, Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada Series 16 (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot, 1996), 4.
63 Alline, *Journal*, 67.
64 Flatt, "Theological Innovation," 299.
65 Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 5–18.
66 E.g., Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 12, 17.

the gospel: a wrathful or relational deity? Indeed, Alline's relational triune God was a welcomed alternative to the seemingly distant and wrathful God of Nova Scotia's religious elite.

Conclusion

This article has explored Alline's Trinitarian beliefs and, in turn, showed how they were central to his ministry and his theology. For Alline, the Trinity's relational nature was essential in creation and redemption and would become unavoidable in the *eschaton*. While his contemporaries criticized the experiential aspect of his ministry, his personal interaction with a relational, triune God during his conversion experience had such an immense impact on him that it became central to his ministry and theological formulations. He had experienced the overflowing love of the Trinity and wanted others to as well. This theme was so powerful for him that it came to undergird much of his theology. For Alline, it was an inescapable conclusion that this "overflowing" and "ravishing" love of the Trinity was in fact "The Great and First Cause of all Things."

Methodological Issues in Black Theology and Dalit Theology: A Critical Dialogue

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Abstract

All theologies emerge from human questions surrounding the relationship between an existential predicament and an ultimate concern. The existential situation provides the type of question posed and colors the answer received. One such instance can be seen in two different but relevant experiences of the people, namely Blacks in America and Dalits in India. Their theological methodologies emanate from two different social milieus, which present different sources of their systemic oppression: the former deals with the issue of racism and the latter casteism. This paper engages in a critical dialogue on the methodological issues in both Black Theology and Dalit Theology with an emphasis on exercising liberation in their present contexts. The rationale for selecting these two theologies is not their similarity in their historical portrayal of oppression but their common origins. There is a common collective heritage among Dalits, South Africans and other people of the African Diaspora. According to V. T. Rajshekar, Dalits are the descendants of Africans who founded the Indus Valley Civilization and who were enslaved by fair-skinned Aryans from the North. He goes on to state that the separation of the struggle of African Americans in the United States from other people of African descent in the Diaspora is harmful to the collective uplift of a people. This common origin and the experience of oppression, along with a friendly yet critical approach, provide us with clues for interrogating Black and Dalit methods.

Theology has always characterized itself not in a vacuum, but in the concrete realities of the lives of people in a particular period of time. It has, at times, been portrayed intellectually, religiously or under the power of an empire in a particular place and period of time. However, doing theology has never been a value- or context-free exercise. Until the nineteenth century, a major part of the theological

enterprise invested its energy in addressing the message of Christianity in the con-
text of a thriving power struggle and an assumed religious superiority. This cultural
mandate stemmed from the manifest destiny to expand the Church and, of course,
from the forces of the Enlightenment. However, the twentieth century saw the rise
of Black,[1] Dalit, Feminist, Latin American, Latino/Latina and American Indian lib-
eration theologies that stem from the experiences of oppression of people based on
race, caste, gender and socio-political economic and cultural forces. All theologies
emerge from human questions surrounding the relationship between an existential
predicament and an ultimate concern. The existential situation provides the type
of question posed and colors the answer received.[2] One such instance can be seen
in two different but relevant experiences of the people, namely Blacks in America
and Dalits in India. Their theological methodologies emanate from two different
social milieus, which present different sources of their systemic oppression: the
former deals with the issue of racism and the latter casteism. This paper engages
in a critical dialogue on the methodological issues in both Black Theology and
Dalit Theology with an emphasis on exercising liberation in their present contexts.

The critical dialogue employed here is not a concept that merely entails super-
ficial conversation. Rather, it passionately involves the world of the other in a
revolutionary way in order to disturb and awaken faith. To phrase it differently,
critical dialogue presupposes the need to be a critical friend who is close by and
at the same time an observer without cultural biases. Anthony Reddie states,

> One needs to maintain a critical distance between oneself and the
> subjects with whom one is engaging. That distance has to be care-
> fully realized, for if one is too far removed from the experiential
> realities of the Black subject, the facility of signifying or the sub-
> ordinate elements of "cultural dissonance" will leave the scholar
> floundering in a cultural vacuum.[3]

Nevertheless, any theological discourse is not culture-neutral, and this paper will,
therefore, reflect some contextual and cultural bias of the author[4] while attempting

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1   The words African American, Afro-American, People of African descent, African Diaspora, People
     of color and Blacks are used interchangeably. However, the author will be using mostly Blacks in
     the entire paper for people of African descent.
2   James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1975). Cf. also, Dwight N. Hopkins,
     Black Theology USA and South Africa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 7.
3   Anthony G. Reddie, *Dramatizing Theologies: A Participative Approach to Black God-Talk*
     (London: Equinox, 2006), 124; see also Anthony G. Reddie, *Nobodies to Somebodies: A Practical
     Theology for Education and Liberation* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2003), 97–99.
4   The author is from India and a non-Dalit coming from middle class upper caste family. However,
     the author has experienced the evil side of caste oppression and stands against such evil practices.
     As James Cone argues, if anybody wants to become involved in Blacks' struggle, then s/he has to
     become Black symbolically and passionately. James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 40th
     anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 103.

to address the issues. As James Cone opines, "Culture refers to the way persons live and move in the world; it molds their thought forms."[5] Therefore, this paper will also reflect the author's cultural expression of the community he represents, i.e., a non-casteist urban pluralistic community with international exposure.

The rationale for selecting these two theologies is not their similarity in their historical portrayal of oppression but their common origins. There is a common collective heritage among Dalits, South Africans and other people of the African Diaspora. According to V. T. Rajshekar, Dalits are the descendants of Africans who founded the Indus Valley Civilization and who were enslaved by fair-skinned Aryans from the North.[6] This common origin and the experience of oppression, along with a friendly yet critical approach, provide us with clues for interrogating Black and Dalit methods. Unlike Mary Veeneeman's approach of analyzing different theological methods without advocating for any specific method, the author tends to be in favor of the inter-contextual liberation method to establish a case for Black and Dalit experiences.

This study will focus on the following questions: What are the methodological approaches undertaken to respond to systemic violence against these groups? Do the methodologies used by Black and Dalit theologians adequately address their issues today? This paper will take the alternative constructive method of *Sarvodaya*[7] model of inter-contextuality for a symbiotic methodological dialogue. Using the *Sarvodaya* model inter-contextually, the author aims to say "no" to all elements of dehumanization beyond boundaries and "yes" to all those committed to the affirmation of the fullest meaning by achieving freedom of life.

Existing Literatures

There is a plethora of literature on Black theological discourses, from James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power*[8] to Victor Anderson's *Beyond Ontological Blackness*.[9] This literature provides substantial material on socio-economic, religious, cultural and political reflection on the Black experience and ethos. At the same time, the writings of Dalit theologians from the time of Arvind P. Nirmal's *A Reader in Dalit Theology*[10] to Sathianathan Clarke's recent edition of *Dalit*

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5   Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 29.
6   Rajshekar goes on to state that the separation of the struggle of African Americans in the United States from other people of African descent in the Diaspora is harmful to the collective uplift of a people. V. T. Rajshekar, *Dalit: The Black Untouchables of India* (Atlanta: Clarity, 1987), 5.
7   It was first used by Acharya Samantbhadra, a Jain servant of 2nd century A.D. It was later taken by Gandhiji along with his influence from John Ruskin's "unto the last" to explain his action, in his liberative freedom movement of India.
8   James. H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury, 1969).
9   Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1995).
10 Arvind. P. Nirmal, ed., *A Reader in Dalit Theology* (Madras: Gurukul, 1992).

Theology in the Twenty-first Century[11] represent significant studies on the Dalit experience and its praxis. These texts have provided a critique of American and Indian society, recommendations for Black and Dalit empowerment, and steps for psychological, physical, theological, and ontological revolution. As a whole, however, this literature has dealt with the experiences of Blacks and Dalits separately.

Nevertheless, there are a few writings that particularly acknowledge the collective struggle of people of African descent, such as *The Rhetoric of Revolution: The Black Consciousness Movement and Dalit Panther Movement* by Antonette Jefferson.[12] Previous researchers also investigated the similar plights among people of African descent throughout the Diaspora, especially in India. In their writings, the authors focused primarily on the convergence and divergence of liberation theologies. Anthony Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, in *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a theology in dialogue*, undertook a theological dialogue between Blacks and Hispanic-Americans. Nevertheless, to achieve clarity in theological approaches used by Black and Dalit theologians, it is critical to interact with some of the standard jargon in theological methods, such as in Stanley Grenz and Roger Olsen's *Twentieth-Century Theology*, Mary Veeneman's *Introducing Theological Method*, and Michael Gorman's *Scripture and Its Interpretation*. This paper will deploy an inter-contextual reading but in a symbiotic dialogical form.

Context of Oppression: The Centrality of the Periphery

Grenz and Olson in *Twentieth-Century Theology* argue that "theology describes faith within a specific historical and cultural context, and therefore it is unashamedly a contextual discipline."[13] If theology is defined historically and contextually, then understanding the historical context in which the liberation movements of Blacks and Dalits occurred is central to grasping both the subtle and salient nuances of these liberation movements. The history of the oppression of Blacks generally began in 1441 when Portuguese sailors left the West Coast of Africa with a group of captive Africans.[14] Dwight Hopkins asserts that "up until 1865, the official end of the North American civil war, roughly 100 million black people had been taken from their homelands in Africa, primarily from the West Coast."[15]

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11 Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Phillip Vinod Peacock, eds., *Dalit Theology in the Twenty-first Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

12 Antonette Jefferson, "The Rhetoric of Revolution: The Black Consciousness Movement and Dalit Panther Movement," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2 (July 2008).

13 Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 9.

14 Colin A. Palmer, "The First Passage: 1502–1619," in *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans,* ed. Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.

15 Dwight N. Hopkins, "The Basics of Black Theology," in *Frontiers in Dalit Hermeneutics*, ed.

Blacks endured legalized slavery first in Virginia and then across North America from 1619 until 1865. The legalized slavery of Blacks defined American history.[16]

Although slavery was intended to end after the declaration of Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and with the culmination of the Civil war in 1865, it was essentially re-instituted by the federal government and local states through Jim Crow laws[17] that segregated, isolated, and oppressed Black people in all walks of social, physical, and economic life, even following (and continuing long after) the passing of the 13th and 14th Amendments (adopted between 1865–1870).[18] William Loren Katz argues that the 14th Amendment, which was aimed to protect the rights and freedom of Blacks, ultimately neglected to do so, becoming instead the protector of corporations.[19] Black codes was enacted by the newly constituted southern governments to empower white supremacy, regardless of the ratification of the 13th Amendment. Important Supreme court cases like *Slaughter-House* case in 1873, *United States v Harris*, and *Plessy v Fergusson* in 1896 were instrumental in undermining the efficacy and practice of these amendments.[20]

James Massey and Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2005), 112.

16   Mildred Bain and Ervin Lewis, eds., *From Freedom to Freedom: African Roots in American Soil* (New York: Random House, 1977).

17   Jim Crow laws was popularized in the ante-bellum Minstrel routine of Thomas Darthmouth Rice, who in 1828 paraded out of Baltimore theatre in blackface and costume. Thomas Rice, also called "Daddy Rice," imitated African-American songs and danced to entertain a white crowd. Later, in the 1870s, Jim Crow laws were passed that discriminated against African-Americans in the Southern states. See William Loren Katz, *Eyewitness; The Negro in American History* (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1967), 340–41; see also Melvin Urofsky, "Jim Crow Law History & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/event/Jim-Crow-law.

18   The Emancipation Proclamation declares, "That on the 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom." *Emancipation Proclamation* (1863), Africans in America: Historical Documents, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1549.html

19   William Loren Katz, *Eyewitness: A Living Documentary of the African American Contribution to American History* (New York: Pitman, 1967), 287.

20   After the Civil war, the reconstruction amendments were aimed at abolishing segregation and uniting the whole populace by giving liberty, equal treatment, and voting rights. However, these laws were not ultimately put into practice due to their erosion by state and federal court decisions. For instance, in the 1896 Plessy vs. Fergusson case, the Supreme Court approved of a "separate but equal" doctrine, ordering that segregation did not violate the United States constitution. As a result, the new order served to enforce Jim Crow laws, which stood as the law of the land until 1954. The result of the *Slaughter-House Cases* in 1873 limited the protections proffered by the 14th Amendment, as the court ruled that states still possessed significant control over matters of civil rights. In 1883, *United States v Harris* resulted in racist murderers walking free without any federal prosecution. See Nathan Newman and J J Gass, "A New Birth of Freedom: The Forgotten History of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments," *Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law*, Judicial Independence Series, http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/ji5.pdf, 9–24. See also William Katz, *Eyewitness*, 341.

Dwight Hopkins notes that "white Americans set up Christian terrorist groups[21] to humiliate blacks by raping, murdering, and lynching [them], as a method to enforce informal slavery."[22] As the US constitution in the 19th century allowed states to determine voting eligibility, people of color experienced disenfranchisement. For example, most states allowed only white males who owned property to vote (by 1856 all white males could vote irrespective of property ownership). Indeed, states could raise any of a host of issues to deny non-whites the right to vote.[23] In all, despite the Reconstruction amendments, and because eligibility was not clearly marked in the US constitution, people of color were consistently denied the right to vote.

As Mark Chapman rightly points out, "The optimism of the 1950s and early 1960s turned to hopelessness and despair as African-Americans in the urban North discovered that the passage of civil rights legislation had no bearing on their economic plight."[24] This plight was based on being black. Blackness or skin color determined their human existence, which in turn is based on white superiority.

White superiority over blackness was not a European creation; rather, it was borrowed from the biblical story of Ham, which historically explained "the origin and natural subordination of black cultures and peoples and the negativity of blackness."[25] Thomas Virgil Peterson quotes James Sloan, a Mississippi Presbyterian cleric, who said that "the sons of Ham are intended by God to be subordinate to whites on all fronts: Anatomy, physiology, history and theology . . . sustain

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21 Hopkins refers here to the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) as a "Christian terrorist group," which is a modern construct. In any case, in the era under discussion, the KKK were racist heroes among many whites, consisting themselves of a group of white Southerners angered over and threatened by the emancipation of Blacks, and thus the loss of slave labor, following the Civil War. See Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Klu Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (1971; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

22 Hopkins, "The Basics of Black Theology," 116.

23 As Kevin Coleman points out, "The Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964 had included provisions intended to guarantee voting rights but, according to the Johnson administration Attorney General, Nicholas Katzenbach, they "had only minimal effect. They [were] too slow." The proposed "Voting Rights Act of 1965" abandoned this "measured" approach and called for certain states and jurisdictions to demonstrate progress, while submitting to federal oversight of voting changes. It was intended "[t]o enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes." Kevin Coleman, *The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Background and Overview,* in Congressional Research Services. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20150310_R43626_af64c8a39967fe182f8aad6097d6b6d94be83352.pdf, 12. See also "The Voting Rights Act of 1965" in *History of Federal Voting Rights Laws*, http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/intro/intro_b.php.

24 While blacks had been granted liberty in U.S laws, they seldom experienced liberty in their economic lives. Mark Chapman, *Christianity on Trial: African-American Religious Thought Before and After Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 3.

25 Robert E. Hood, *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 155.

one another."[26] Concerning the story of Ham with relation to black oppression, Mary Veeneman interprets the biblical text and opines that "the origin of this interpretation of the biblical text may be rabbinic Judaism. Some statements in the Midrash, Talmud, and later medieval texts seem to indicate that God cursed the descendants of Ham with dark skin and lives of Slavery."[27] Moreover, Hood goes a step further and argues that this message took blackness or darkness as a sign of evil and inferiority, which became the topic of many Christian sermons in colonial America.[28] However, Veeneman analyzes rabbinic sources and argues that "rabbinic literature follows the biblical text in seeing Canaan, rather than Ham, as the one who was cursed."[29]

Using the Bible as the authority, Blacks were pushed to the ghettos to be the bearer of the white agenda. Later, white religion came as a savior to help save Blacks from their status. Many Blacks adopted white religion for their survival. White religion was therefore able to thwart the identity of Blacks by assimilating them to white religion in the contemporary society. Within this context, Elijah Muhammed appealed to fellow black men and women to "get out of the church and into the Mosques" as the sole solution to Black oppression.[30] According to Cone, this brought a crisis of identity for Blacks. However, one could argue that the discrimination was already there and that the story of Ham was used after the fact to justify it, i.e., eisegesis (reading into a text) versus exegesis (reading out of a text).

Whatever be the origin, the story of Ham played a significant role for the oppression of Blacks since the seventeenth century and throughout the American Civil War. In her analysis, Veeneman relates Cone's idea of black experience with the continued oppression from the white folks; these have not only historical significance but also political and ecclesiological effects. Despite Veeneman's meticulous account of Black theology of liberation and its methodology through the lens of James Cone, she wittingly or unwittingly overlooked the other methodologies in Black theology like Mark Chapman, Dwight Hopkins, Victor Anderson, Horace Griffin and so on. However, omissions like these are expected when summarizing a big issue in a short form.

The 1960s were marked by the activities of Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, who initiated the Civil Rights Movement and the Black

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26 Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South,* ATLA Monograph Series (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press and The American Theological Library Association, 1978), 97.
27 Mary M. Veeneman, *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 128. Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017
28 Hood, *Begrimed and Black,* 159.
29 Veeneman, *Introducing Theological Method*, 129.
30 Chapman, *Christianity on Trial,* 46.

Power Movement to restore Black identity. Carmichael was the one who shouted out "Black Power" during a "march begun by James Meredith, Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) [as they] rallied a crowd in Greenwood, Mississippi";[31] and it led to a significant debate within the Civil Rights Movement. It became a debate because of King's worry about its connotation of violence.[32] Malcolm X, because he was from the North, reflected a more nationalist position which carried the anger of the "Black Power Movement."[33] Black consciousness, advocated by King, provided Black power, a reliable weapon in the hands of the oppressed to fight white brutality.

This consciousness was given proper shape by the rise of Black theology, among which the major personalities involved have been James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, and Albert Cleage, among others. Among prominent theologians, James Cone was more sympathetic to the radical Black power movement of Malcolm X, as he applied the revolutionary principles of Black power to Christian liberative praxis in Tillichian terms.[34] In actuality, Cone was challenged about the theology he was writing because he was using European sources to write a Black liberation theology. This was rectified by Cone in his later work called *The Spiritual and the Blues: An Interpretation,*[35] where he tried to wrest the mini-narratives of African history from the clutches of Eurocentric principles. However, Joseph Washington challenged "the black congregations to 'go out of the business' and enter white congregations *en masse.*"[36] Washington was not sympathetic towards the theology for Blacks as it would mimic White theology, and therefore the best way to theologize would be to march into white churches.

"Standing on the shoulders"[37] of first-generation Black theologians, the second-generation theologians like Dwight Hopkins, Mark Chapman, Cornel West, Garth Baker-Fletcher, Kati Cannon, Jacquelyn Grant, Horace Griffin and Victor Anderson espoused issues that were uncritically overlooked in the works of

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31 "Black Power," in *Stanford: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute*, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/black-power

32 "Black Power," in *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Encyclopedia*, http://mlkkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_stokely_carmichael_1941_1998/

33 These movements addressed the issue of Black oppression and the need for Black power. King, being an Integrationist, gave a Christian message to Black consciousness, and Malcolm X, a Muslim nationalist, provided the political, public and ethical mandate for Black Power. James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 2.

34 It was a Black pilgrimage to attack white supremacy and white theologies. Black theology sought to topple the Tower of Babel of white belief that regarded white Christianity as a means to make Blacks better and obedient slaves. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History 1966–1979* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 123; see also James H. Cone, "Jesus Christ in Black Theology," in *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Curt Cadorette, et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 145.

35 James Cone, *The Spiritual and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury, 1972).

36 Joseph Washington, *Black Religion*, Beacon Paperback ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1966), 289.

37 Chapman, *Christianity on Trial,* 5.

the first generation. Those issues include gender, ethnicities, class, sexual orientation, and ethics that defined the marginal existence of Black racial identity.

On the other hand, Dalit oppression, according to Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, manifested as dehumanization in the hands of oppressors and is based on one's caste and untouchability. Some theorists trace this structure to the Aryans and their ways of relating to the people of India as they encountered them through invasion/migration from the northwest around 1500 BCE. However, Ambedkar holds that the structure has been the result of the distinction between tribesmen and the "broken men" from alien tribes.[38] But most anthropologists concur with the former view. Moreover, from the outset, Aryans looked at the indigenous people as culturally inferior and excluded them as ritually unclean or *chandalas* (post-Rig Vedic literature). Because *chandalas* were ritually unclean, they were treated as untouchables. Louis Dumont, a French anthropologist, considers untouchability as a cultural phenomenon of the Brahmanic social order. According to him, caste and untouchability represent the institutionalization of hierarchical values. These values stem from four castes predominant in India.[39] The lowest class is the Dalits, who are known as the untouchables and therefore are not included in the caste structure as they are not even counted as humans. In this ladder of caste structure, hierarchy is expressed as a cultural signboard of relative purity and impurity and in which Brahmins are placed at the top and the untouchables at the bottom.[40] For James Massey, the word "Dalit" comes from the Sanskrit word *dal* meaning "broken," "crushed" or "split open."[41] Put differently, Dalits have been the most degraded, broken, downtrodden, exploited, and least educated in Indian society.

S. Lourdunathan opines that the intervention of Buddhism, B. R. Ambedkar and the Dalit movements played a vital role in the emancipation of Dalits. Buddhism brought the concept of non-violence and equality of all humans. However, Massey denies the role of Buddhism in the emancipation of Dalits in practical

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38 James Massey, *Roots of Dalit History, Christianity, Theology and Spirituality* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), 51.

39 Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 205–12. The Brahmins, the priests and holy leaders represent the highest class, which is followed by the Kshatriya (Kings), the princes and warriors. The *vaishyas* are the farmers, merchants, and artisans of society, and the *shudras* are servants and workers. See Sager Schmidt, et al., *Patterns of Religion* (Belmont: Wordsworth, 2005), 132–45.

40 V. Devasahayam, "Pollution, Poverty and Powerlessness—A Dalit Perspective," in *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, ed. A. P. Nirmal (Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1990), 1–6.

41 Dalits have been socially and culturally, economically and politically subjugated and marginalized through three thousand years of history. Here Massey wanted to liberate Dalits from the anthropological construct by the Brahmanical order. This can be accomplished only when Dalit anthropology confronts its own historical credibility as the original inhabitants of India. James Massey, *Towards Dalit Hermeneutics: Rereading the Text, the History and the Literature* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 28.

forms.[42] Their interventions promoted a philosophy of resistance and at times strategic interventions to restore the "Speaking body" of Dalits, which was muted by the casteist philosophy. He argues that the benumbed body of the Dalits, by and within the traditional Hindu caste system, needed to be empowered by projecting a political philosophy of Dalit liberation.[43] However, the post-Independence era saw the hard toil of B. R. Ambedkar, the ideas regarding self-respect of Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra,[44] and the Dravidian movement of Periyar in Tamilnadu.[45] These, together with the *adi-Hindu* or *adi-Andhra* movement[46] all over India, enabled the informed affirmative action for the Dalits and the *Adivasis* (original inhabitants) to be enshrined in the Constitution of India.[47] From the 1970s onwards, the Dalits forcefully expressed a social, political and cultural awareness in the form of Dalit literature, Dalit organizations, and Dalit political parties. This awareness resulted in the organization of Christian Dalits into various grass roots movements and the fight against the unjust marginalization at the hands of dominant Christians and against the government bias against religious freedom. Their timely consciousness of who they are and what they should do to achieve their rightful place in society became the stepping stone towards a wider movement of liberation.

The efforts toward Dalit theological discourse made a radical break with the Brahmanical theologies and their major concentration on elucidating a hermeneutical key within the premises of the Indian philosophical system. This philosophical system was casteist in nature and undermined the Dalit experience. In such a context, Dalit theology developed by Arvind P. Nirmal, James Massey and

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42 Massey, *Towards Dalit Hermeneutics,* 15–30.

43 S. Lourdunathan, "The Cultural Context for Evolving a Philosophy of Dalit Emancipation," in *Frontiers in Dalit Hermeneutics,* ed. James Massey and Samson Prabhakar (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2005), 239.

44 Jyotiba Phule (1827–1890), coming from an inferior "mali" caste in Maharashtra, was a prominent activist, thinker and social reformer during the 19th century. During his time, he tried bringing in positive renovations in the spheres of education, agriculture, caste system, social position of women, etc. He was the founder of *Satya shodhak Samaj* (Truth Seeking Association) Movement. See Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi, Jyotirao Phule, trans. Daya Agarwal, http://www.arvind-guptatoys.com/arvindgupta/phule.pdf

45   E. V. Ramasami, or E.V.R. as he was popularly known, was born on Sept. 17, 1879 at Erode in Tamil Nadu. In 1925, he left the Congress party and fought against the caste practices in Kerala. E.V.R. strove for the emancipation of the exploited masses and weaker sections of society. See *Social Science History 8*, Social Science History Association (New Delhi: Ratna Sagar, 2005), 59.

46 This movement originated in Andhra Pradesh, under the leadership of Bhagya Reddy Verma who endlessly engaged in consciousness-raising among the Dalits as to their identity and plights. Inspired by Ambedkar, he supported separate electorates for Dalits. See Swapna Samel, *Dalit Movement in South India 1857–1950* (New Delhi: Serials, 2004).

47 Dalit and Adivasis Right initiatives under The Constitution of India have banned any form of structural and individual violence rendered against Dalits and Adivasis under Article 17 and Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989. See National Advisory Council, *Strengthening the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 & Rules 1995*, http://nac.nic.in/pdf/scst_recom.pdf

M. E. Prabhakar gave a systematic representation of Dalit experience and history from a theological perspective. Following their methodological exclusivism as the theological method, the issue of marginal Dalits to the center of theological debate became warranted. However, after three decades of survival, Dalit theology stagnated as its contribution to the Dalit cause became minimal in the postliberal and postmodern context of India. Therefore, the second generation of theologians like Sathianathan Clarke, Peniel Rajkumar, Phillip Peacock, L. Jayachitra, Monica Melanchthon, Evangeline Rajkumar and Y. T. Vinaraj brought a different framework for interpreting the Dalit experience from variegated perspectives. These include gender, class, and globalization. Since mapping the stories of Black and Dalit experiences depicts one side of the story of oppression, it nevertheless opens up a platform for an open conversation. Each of these stories "shows what is at stake in these kinds of conversations."[48]

Level of Oppression?

Is it justifiable to quantify the oppression of people? The level of oppression is always contested by those who compare it. Where Sanjay Paswan and Pramanshi Jaideva—Indian anthropologists—err, however, is in suggesting that the level of oppression suffered by Dalits is greater than that of enslaved Africans in America or Europe because those other places "were better placed in terms of certain minimum access to civilized life such as education and training."[49] Antonette Jefferson argues that this statement reinforces oppression by creating division within itself. Concurring with Jefferson, the author insinuates that Paswan and Jaideva did not have an accurate portrayal or had not done a thorough investigation of slavery in the States, where enslavers went to great lengths to ensure that Africans, like in the Dalit experience, were not afforded the opportunity of literacy. Jefferson resuscitates Paswan and Jaideva's assertion:

> Dalits are vulnerable to "domination, exploitation and oppression by powerful, aggressive, and arrogant self-serving socio-economic and political interests" [which] forces one to reject trivializing the oppression of people of African descent.[50]

In other words, oppression cannot be measured on a single level. There are various forms of oppression, and they need not be in contest with one another. Blacks are oppressed based on their blackness, and Dalits on their lineage. Both were "destined" to be servants. Whatever the level of oppression, the experiences

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48 Veeneman, *Introducing Theological Method*, 2.
49 Sanjay Paswan and Pramanshi Jaideva eds., *Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India,* vol. 14 (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2002), 15.
50 Jefferson, "The Rhetoric of Revolution," 51.

of oppression present to us the face of racism and the face of casteism. These faces represent the doors that open to construct a methodology to deal with this oppression.

What is the common factor in these modes of oppression? There is another facet to be pursued, particularly the similarities between the racially-based oppression of Blacks and the caste-oriented marginalization of Dalits. Generally speaking, a caste is understood as a social class made distinct from others by differences in rank, profession or wealth. In Hinduism, everyone born in a caste, or *jati*, cannot change his or her caste until death. Michael D. Coogan explains:

> Underlying the hierarchical social system is the fundamental Hindu idea that people are born into an existence that is the fruit of their past karma. One's social status in life is therefore traditionally considered predetermined and immutable, and the individual must adhere to the particular ritual practices and dietary rules of his or her jati.[51]

However, many scholars studying the history of India concur that the caste system might have evolved due to race. It is believed that, along with sacrificial religions, Aryans might have integrated a caste system into the country, dominating the darker-skinned natives.[52] An etymological inquiry supports this argument. The English word *caste* is probably derived from the Portuguese word *casta*, meaning race. It is especially used by the Europeans to denote the division of people in Hindu society. Varna, color*, jati*, and race are all Indian words that can be used interchangeably.[53] The word caste seems to have been applied to India by the Portuguese in the middle of fifteenth century.[54] The Hindu religious scriptures like Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda and the Manusmriti used caste ostensibly to differentiate people based on occupation, lineage, and the result of deeds in the past. Practically and more ontologically speaking, however, it refers to dark complexion. In India, dark symbolizes evil and uncleanliness. Therefore, being dark or black is one of the root causes of any form of oppression that has been witnessed throughout the centuries, whether for Dalits or for Blacks.

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51 Micheal D. Coogan, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 159–60; see also Katelyn Coyle, *The History of Untouchables: The Buraku and the Dalit*, http://www.agorajournal.org/2006/History%20of%20Untouchables.pdf
52 Partha P. Majumder, "Indian Caste Origins: Genomic Insights and Future Outlooks," *Genome Research* 11 (June 2001), 931–32.
53 S. N. Singh, *Reservation Policy for Backward Classes* (Jaipur, Rajasthan: Rawat Publication, 1996), 2.
54 J. Murdoch, *Review of Caste in India* (Jaipur, Rajasthan: Rawat, 1997), ii.

Sources and Norms of Black and Dalit Theology

Sources and norms play a significant role in any methodology. They are presuppositions that determine the questions that are to be asked, as well as the answers that are to be given.[55] They are the data that enable any researcher to reach certain goals, thus making sources and norms a teleological imperative.[56] The sources and norms of Black and Dalit theology should consider the indispensability of community experience to articulate relevant theological discourse. However, White and Brahmanical theology present the gospel in light of the social, political, cultural, economic, and gender benefits of the White and the Brahmin majority. Both theologies cater to similar points of consensus.

Black and Dalit theology should take their experiences seriously as a "point of departure of all God-talk." They acknowledge the importance of God's revelation in Christ: "what does Jesus Christ mean when faced with White racism and casteism?"[57] The purpose is to make sense of their experiences in their Black and Dalit ethos. However, second-generation Black theologians like Horace Griffin critiqued Black theology for lack of a holistic appropriation of sources from the Black community. He argues that if Black experience does not consider the experience of the Black homosexual community, then liberation claimed by Black theologians is not liberation at all.[58] Therefore, Black theology needs to take the experience of sexual minorities into consideration to be holistic.

"History" is a vital source for determining the origin and perpetual forms of oppression. History is witness to the fact that along with the experience of slavery and subsequent treatment of Black and Dalit people as non-humans in America and India respectively, there was also resistance to every act of brutality with slave revolts and rebellions, the Abolitionist movements, and the Dalit Panther Movement.[59] It was a culture in which God situated Godself through Jesus Christ to emancipate the poor from the systemic oppression of their time and establish a kingdom of equal identity. Thus, a dignified identity is one of the main visions of liberative movements that play a centripetal role in the fight for liberation.[60]

Both theologies take "Revelation" seriously, as it provides the basis for Christian reflection. For Blacks, it is an event of historical importance. According to James Cone, it is "God's self-revelation to the human race through a historical act

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55 James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1970), 23.

56 Fernando Canale, "Evolution, Theology and Method, Part 3: Evolution and Adventist Theology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (Spring 2004): 10.

57 Canale, "Evolution Theology and Method," 24; see also Kondasingu Jesurathnam, *Dalit Liberative Hermeneutics: Indian Christian Interpretation of Psalm 22* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 161.

58 Horace L. Griffin, *Their Own Receive Them Not* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2006), 3–7.

59 Dalit Panther Movement in Mumbai by Namdev Dhasai in 1972, India was inspired by Black Panther Party.

60 V. Devasahayam, *Doing Dalit Theology in Biblical Key* (Madras: ISPCK, 1997), 13–18; see also Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 30.

of human liberation. It is a Black event—it is what blacks are doing about their liberation."[61] Therefore, the event of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ reveals who God is and what God does for the marginalized. For Dalits, it is a "happening" whereby God not only breaks into the Israelite community but also supports Dalits' ethos and frees them from the clutches of ongoing inhumanity.[62]

Concerning scripture, James Cone asserts that "The meaning of scripture is not to be found in the words of scripture as such but only in its power to point beyond itself to the reality of God's revelation—and in America, that means black liberation."[63] The Bible as scripture is very significant for the African-Americans because the Bible not only mirrors the Black experiences but also introduces to them a world of tradition built on the shoulders of people who lived in faith and total trust in God against all oppression; and it assures them that they are not alone in their faith journey. Michael Gorman in his work *Scripture and Its Interpretation* depicts the Bible as a "library" with "its historical and geographical context,"[64] embedded in the lived realities of a community of faith. He says, "And like a good library, in fact like any good book, Scripture also invites all of us into a world that we could not imagine on our own."[65] Gorman's ecumenical reading of Scripture is worth noting because it opens up diverse cultural and religious tradition that would enhance the faith journey. African-American use of scripture and their respective African religious roots, therefore, offer significant insights into the development of Black methodology.

"Tradition," on the other hand, is to be used as far as it can be helpful for their liberative pursuit.[66] For instance, according to Gorman, "the importance of preaching in the black church tradition can be directly traced to the role of narrative and narrator (the storyteller, or *jail/fundi/griot*) in African tribal culture" for a liberative meaning.[67] This storytelling tradition offers significant resources in the search for authentic Black hermeneutics. African-American scholars like Dwight Hopkins and Mark Chapman use the traditional African storytelling method to cultivate Black liberation theologies.[68]

For Dalits, the scripture, like in Black theology, is rooted in its tradition and faith; and it offers a source of power and comfort in moments of crisis, both

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61 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 31.
62 Devasahayam, *Doing Dalit Theology in Biblical Key,* 48.
63 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 34.
64 Michael J. Gorman, ed., *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), xxi.
65 Gorman, *Scripture and Its Interpretation,* xxii.
66 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 34.
67 Gorman, *Scripture and Its Interpretation,* 301.
68 Dwight N. Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

personal and communal. The Bible is used to address the life realities of the Dalit under casteist oppression.[69]

Another source for Black and Dalit theology is culture, which includes art, literature, music, folk culture, language, etc. As Dwight Hopkins argues, "In the structure and words of folk culture, a people's faith breaks through to provide an important source for constructive black theological development."[70] Moreover, the Black Power Movement and Civil Rights Movement for Blacks, and the Dalit Panther Movement and Ambedkar Ideology for Dalits find their vocation in creating a space in the political scene.[71] The norm of their theology, as argued by James Cone and Devasahayam, is informed by the revelatory event in Jesus Christ that breaks into their realities and fights for their liberation. Having located the sources and norms, it becomes imperative to know how these sources are used to construct a method that might be palpable to their experience.

Methodology of Black Theology

Black Theology proposes an epistemological break with traditional totalitarian Western theology. Black theology in the tradition of liberation theology chooses social context as its starting point, particularly the cry of the oppressed. The experience of Black people is the instrument for formulating theology. It is a theology from below that can counter any form of hegemonic and autocratic expression.[72] Social analysis takes into consideration the links between racism, capitalism, and imperialism on the one hand, and theology and church on the other. James Cone applied his Marxist class analysis after 1973 in the WCC symposium on Black theology and Liberation theology.[73] It was at that time that he realized the need to counter economic disparity between the Black rich and the Black poor. What does God have to do with the experiences of the Black people with all their socio-economic and political alienation, in their fight for liberation? The Christology of James Cone is based on the biblical portrayal of Jesus Christ and Jesus's past and present involvement in the struggles of oppressed peoples. He asserts, "That God could 'make a way out of no way' in Jesus' cross was truly absurd to the intellect,

69 V. Devasahayam ed., *Frontiers of Dalit Theology* (Madras: Gurukul Summer Institute, 1997), 52.

70 Dwight N. Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 128.

71 Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 44–46.

72 As social relations have been identified as the starting point for theologizing, social analysis becomes an important tool of theology in mediating between Black experience and the theological reformulation. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 33–34.

73 James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 88–93.

yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk."[74] In short, it is a critical reflection on "praxis," as reflection on action in the struggle for liberation.[75]

Liberative theological praxis provides the shape for the Black religious and political identity and is oriented to equip Blacks or African Americans to follow the liberative model of the Exodus event and Jesus Christ. According to Cone, "The exodus, the call of Israel into being as the people of God of the covenant, the gift of the Promised Land, the rise of prophesy, the second exodus, and above all the incarnation reveal God's self-giving love to the oppressed humanity."[76] However, to apply their method, Cone understood the need for Black consciousness and Black power as the instruments to materialize the act of liberation. For example, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner articulated "Black consciousness," and it was Marcus Garvey's genius to organize Black people at a time when no one else was organizing Black people, especially around the concept of "Black." Cone argued that "no one denies that Garvey organized the largest and most successful mass movement of blacks in the history of United States."[77]

R. S. Tshaka opines that Black consciousness among Blacks is not just knowing one's racial oppression in the world but also engaging Blacks to deal with the self-hatred of the Black community that arose out of a racist world.[78] This can be witnessed in Garvey's slogan, "To be Negro is no disgrace, but an honor and we of the Universal Negro Improvement Association do not want to become white."[79] Therefore, Black consciousness is coming back to self-consciousness; it investigates the root cause of this hatred that characterizes Black people, and it takes pride in their history. This is possible when Blacks realize their responsibility to come out of whiteness and take pride in their blackness.

However, Victor Anderson brought a serious critique of Garvey and called Garvey's project "African imperialism."[80] He argues that "such a discourse would see the cultural aesthetics of the Enlightenment radicalized into an imperialist cult of black genius."[81] Within this imperialist model, Anderson argued, Garvey turned the Black revolutionary spirit of liberation into an imperialistic cult of racial superiority, which is much like the white racial agenda. Here, Anderson chooses to go beyond the ontological and reified form of blackness to apply a more

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74 James H. Cone, *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 2.
75 Grenz and Olson, *20ᵗʰ-Century Theology*, 202.
76 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 72.
77 Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America,* 14.
78 R. S. Tshaka, "Do our Theological Methodologies Help us to Deal with Situations of Violence in Black Communities, Specifically Afrophobia?" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 138 (Nov 2010): 133.
79 Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey,* vol. 2 (New York: Arno/ New York Times, 1969), 325–26.
80 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness,* 76.
81 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness*, 72.

nuanced religious critical method. He highlights the danger of essentializing a Black aesthetic that would be constructed within the framework of imperialistic ontic whiteness, which Black theologians were fighting against. It is because the racial ontology itself is the creation of whiteness. Therefore, it is the "blackness that whiteness created."[82] Against the background of a white or black racial aesthetic superiority, Anderson's religious critical method proposes an extreme aesthetic or grotesque in order to uplift the marginalized in African American society.

James Cone employed Paul Tillich's method of correlation in defining his method. However, he took his method to a functional level to attain liberation. Cone's methodological quest was to liberate Blacks from their experience of "non-being" to "being" in freedom from oppression through God's liberating activity. According to Charles Fielding Stewart, III, "His method of correlation sought theological answers to the interminable suffering and dehumanization especially of Black people, a people who have endured these hardships because of the color of their external being."[83] Therefore, Cone's theological formulation provides a systematic approach towards emancipation of Blacks from oppressive structures.

Cone's initial journey against white racism resulted in presenting Black Theology with an ethnocentric view that developed within the framework of a moral critique. This was a stumbling block not only for second generation scholars but also to other theological networks. First generation Black theologians including Cone himself identified the lack of proper involvement with worldwide theological fraternities in their struggle for liberation. A dialogical approach was taken to address the criticism leveled against Black Theology. Therefore, in 1976, Black Theology echoed the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians' (EATWOT) emphasis on the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, its standing with the experiences of marginalized communities as the basis for knowledge, and the underscoring of self-critique and accountability to God's call for justice.[84] Therefore, Cone highlights the importance of *praxis,* where "theology arises from our experience in the ghettoes, villages, and the churches of the poor in our countries."[85] Further, Black Theology's methodology seeks to incorporate other liberation theologies of the Third World in the act of liberation with the aim to bring justice to an unjust world. Unless Jesus Christ comes to terms with the ghetto experience of Blacks and the poor of the world, justice will not be complete.

In response to Black theology, Grenz and Olson lament the presence of an

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82 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness*, 13.
83 Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, "The Method of Correlation in the Theology of James H. Cone" in *Journal of Religious Thought* XIV (1957): 31–32.
84 Cone, *For My People*, 140–53.
85 Cone, *For My People*, 148.

"ethnocentric" agenda in Black methodology. Conversely, they argue that "Prior to the 1960s, theologians, regardless of their theological orientation, perceived their efforts and their discipline in terms of the engagement in the quest for truth on behalf of all humankind."[86] This assertion "on behalf of all humankind" by Grenz and Olson goes against their own initial assertion in the preface that all theology is historic-specific and a cultural reflection. Another problem of Grenz and Olson is that, while criticizing Black theology as ethnocentric, they seem to be aloof to the fact that their work is clearly representative of Western European or American Caucasian males. If 95% of the authors of *Twentieth-Century Theology* represent Western Caucasian males, then their claim for a theology "on behalf of all humankind" is a farce.

Methodology of Dalit Theology

All theologies of *praxis,* except Medieval scholastic theology, which ignored raw life experience, are contextual and have to deal with the raw life experience of the people. Dalit methodology is no different from any other contextual reflection on theology. The context of the theology of Dalits is one of a people who were oppressed and sidelined in the name of caste consciousness.[87] A. P. Nirmal termed the experience of Dalits as *pathos* or suffering. It is from the Dalit pathos that theology needs to be constructed; otherwise, it will be like seedless fruit. Pathos provides an epistemological break from other dominant theological enterprises that had been oppressing the Dalits.

For Nirmal, the implication of the above epistemological break is that Dalit theology must observe a "methodological exclusivism in relation to other theologies." However, this methodological exclusivism is not directed toward constructing an exclusive community. Rather, it is open to all those marginalized communities who are suffering in the name of caste, class, color, gender, and sex orientation, etc. They must also be willing to receive help from all possible sources and promote community relationships. Nevertheless, he affirms that to produce a theology of the people, it is necessary that Dalit theology should remain "exclusive in character." This exclusivism must be stressed "because the tendency of all dominant traditions—cultural or theological—is to accommodate, include, assimilate and finally conquer others."[88] Hence, as a people's theology it needs to

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86 Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology*, 209.
87 Following the steps of any other people's theology, Dalit theology vociferously rejects the assumption of any imported universal theology that claims to answer their suffering. Like any other liberation theology, the point of departure for Dalit methodology is the experience of struggle against the dominant structures and oppressive elements.
88 Arvind P. Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology," in *A Reader in Dalit Theology,* ed. Arvind P. Nirmal (Madras: Gurukul, 1991), 58–59.

be on its guard and needs to shut off the influences of the dominant theological traditions.

In Nirmal's assessment, the primacy of the term "Dalit" will have to be conceded to the primacy of the term "Christian" in the dominant, primary theological meaning. One may ask then what is Christian about Dalit theology? We can say that "it is the dalitness which is 'Christian' about Dalit theology."[89] Moreover, the "Christian" for this theology is exclusively the "Dalit." What this exclusivism implies is the affirmation that the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is on the side of the Dalits and struggles with them against the oppressors. Ultimately, it is the common Dalit experience of Christian Dalits along with the other Dalits that will shape a Christian Dalit theology.[90]

Why and from whom should Dalit Theology exclude any influence? In Nirmal's view, Dalit Theology will represent a radical discontinuity with the classical Indian Christian Theology of the Brahmanic tradition, which follows the Indian philosophical system. This means that a Christian Dalit theology will be a counter theology.[91] For M. E. Prabhakar, the discontinuity with the Brahmanic tradition invites a radically different theology whose starting point is from "below." Therefore, "it uses Dalit language and expressions, their stories and songs of sufferings and triumphs, popular wisdom including their values, proverbs, folk lore and myths and so on to interpret their history and culture and to articulate a faith to live by and to act on."[92] By returning to their basics, Dalits would eventually discard any academic or any intellectual activity that carries the dominant ideology and has little or no direct contact with realities experienced by the people. Dalit theology is not only a people's self-affirmation of doing their theology from within their own pathos, but it is also an innovative substitutive consciousness of economic equality, political justice, and a religion of God's freedom in the life of Dalits.

From the aforementioned discussion, it is understood that the traditional dominant theology arose out of the propositions of the Brahmanical philosophical system, i.e., from above, believed to be the only truth. This truth was arranged logically, consistently, coherently and systematically and therefore away from any kind of realities of the people anchored in life. Dalit methodology contests this logically and consistently revealed truth because it does not answer the questions derived out of Dalit pathos. Thus, Dalit Theology relies on the sociological discipline to analyze the social realities of Dalits.[93] Unlike other liberation

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89 Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology," 58–59.
90 Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology," 58–59.
91 Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology," 59.
92 M. E. Prabhakar, "The Search for Dalit Theology," in *Indigenous People: Dalits*, *Dalit Issues in Today's Theological Debate,* ed. James Massey (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 48.
93 Arvind P. Nirmal, "Doing Theology from Dalit Perspective," in *A Reader in Dalit Theology,* ed.

theologies, it takes into consideration the religio-cultural aspect to read the extent of oppression without negating the Marxist social analysis. Therefore, Dalit methodology shifts from universal truths to the particularities of Dalit pathos. It is the pathos of Dalits derived from casteist and Brahmanical structure and Dalits' own historical and cultural expressions, which makes it unique from Black methodology. The historical and cultural roots of Dalits go back to the pre-Dravidian period (3000 BCE), and therefore, it is a gigantic task but not impossible. Theologians like James Massey and other Dalit anthropologists are trying to resurrect these expressions from their own oral traditions and literatures belonging to Brahmanical structures.

Just as Black consciousness is important in doing Black methodology so too is Dalit historical consciousness important in doing Dalit methodology. The consciousness of Dalits in history was the product of the dominant religious system as a divine imperative to keep Dalits as servants forever. Nevertheless, Dalits have their own glorious history in the form of stories, myths, folklore, and community dramas that depict their forebears' glorious past. It is transmitted from generation to generation orally. Therefore, Dalits, being conscious of their past, understood the evil intention of the master-narratives as not God-given but rather man-made, as something to be dismantled. So, they have begun to question the rationale behind their relegation as untouchable in the Hindu social order and regaining their consciousness would enable Dalits to create their identity and write their history. To resuscitate this lost history is to bring Dalits back from their stories of non-being, scripted and directed by the dominant system. In other words, history, from their point of view or "from below," has to be prepared in order to restructure their theology to recover their lost dignity. The lost history of Dalits cannot easily be revived due to the lack of a proper written history. Nevertheless, the oral histories, folklores, and stories can be used to restructure the history of Dalits. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel asserts, "Their history is buried in their folk songs, stories myths, certain extent religious symbols and practices."[94] For James Massey, restructuring Dalit history is a theological act and art that reconstructs history by reclaiming consciousness.[95] Therefore, theologizing is the art of going into the history and consciousness of the Dalits who are imprisoned under Brahmanical history and liberating them through an act of self-affirmation and self-respect.

The pathos of Dalits becomes the paradigmatic locus of theologizing. Along with the histories of Dalits, the stories of the suffering people today from the vantage point of the subject rather than the object provide an ample resource for

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Arvind P. Nirmal (Madras: Gurukul, 1991), 139.

94 A. M. Abraham Ayroorkuzhiel, ed., *Dalit Desyita* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1990).

95 James Massey, *Down Trodden: The Struggle of India's Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation* (Geneva: WCC, 1997), 59.

doing theology in Dalit contexts. Y. T. Vinayaraj's postmodern approach locates the subject as the epistemological *loci* that decenters the objective fascination of the dominant.[96] That is, the methodology that Dalits utilize when reflecting on God and its activities should come out from the daily life experience or *habitus* of Dalits.

Last but not least, liberative praxis is the method of Dalit theology. By praxis, we do not mean rejection of theory. Rather, it should emerge from a theory that is oriented to transformation, which can be witnessed in Martin Luther King's theory. It is in the dialectics of theory and action that the structure of oppression is highlighted and repudiated. By pointing to false and oppressive relationships it brings them to awareness, which is the first step towards transforming them. Therefore, Dalit theology is an effort to examine critically and re-interpret the liberative and humanistic values that were shadowed under Brahmanical philosophies and theologies and to deploy a new method of liberative praxis based on Ambedkar's ideology,[97] one that resuscitates their cultural and religious values, which have become long forgotten.

A Critical Dialogue: Towards a Methodological Praxis

Having discussed the method of action for the theological construction of Black and Dalit theology, it becomes imperative to be involved in the dialogical praxis so as to ease the pathway for learning, unlearning and relearning. In this methodological inquiry, the dialogue should be channeled into four areas: Theological, Christological, Ecclesiological, and Hermeneutical.

Theological and Christological Issues

The method used in any theological talk is intended to interpret God from various perspectives by theologians in different contexts. Throughout the centuries, these perspectives have grappled with the issues of Transcendence and Immanence. However, the former has usually taken precedence. Theologians like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, who emphasized transcendence, believe that a transcendent God cannot mingle with human realities. Grenz and Olson stand for balancing

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96 Y. T. Vinayaraj, "Envisioning a Postmodern Method of Doing Dalit Theology," in *Dalit Theology in the Twenty-first Century: Discordant Voices, Discerning Pathways,* ed. Sathianathan Clarke, Deenbandhu Manchala and Phillip Vinod Peacock (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93–102.

97 Ambedkar's ideology is based on *Dhamma Raj,* meaning "Kingdom of righteousness," derived from Buddha's understanding of *Dhamma.* This Kingdom is a society of liberty, equality and fraternity and hence the driving force for revolution. The underlying foundation of this Kingdom is the experience of divine state of love, justice and peace. He worked for the liberation of Dalits and other weaker section of society. Although he advocated for non-violent methods to achieve the goal, he never denied the use of violent methods if necessary. See Anthoniraj Thumma, *Springs from the Subaltern: Pattern's and Perspectives in People's Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 32–39.

both transcendence and immanence with strategic relationality. They argue that "an overemphasis on transcendence can lead to a theology that is irrelevant to the cultural context in which it seeks to speak, whereas an overemphasis on immanence can produce a theology held captive to a specific culture."[98]

However, with the rise of liberation theologies, theologians questioned the transcendental priority in classical and modern theology. Like "After Auschwitz" theologies, Black and Dalit theology struggled with the question of the presence of God in an oppressive situation. The question was, "How do these liberation theologies from different contexts balance the concepts of transcendence and immanence?" James Cone affirmed that "God always encounters us in a situation of historical liberation."[99] Nevertheless, Cone did not reject the transcendental worth in reflecting the oppression of the people. For him, transcendence means that the reality of a God who is involved in the struggle for liberation is not limited to any one particular human liberating experience, but rather, oppression of any sort is absorbed into his very being. As he asserts, "Liberation is not an afterthought, but the essence of divine activity."[100] This is also a major theme of Jewish theology vis-à-vis the Exodus (from slavery!) and the Passover Haggadah (evidently written during Roman domination).

Because Blacks have encountered the immanence of the divine in their liberation, they have ultimately revealed the transcendence of their cause of liberation beyond all human premises. When applying Paul Tillich's tension of transcendence and immanence, Cone interprets this tension to mean that "our struggle for liberation is the infinite participating in the concrete reality of human existence. But because God is always more than our experience of God, the reality of God cannot be limited to a particular human experience."[101] How do the particular historical experiences relate to the transcendence of God? Cone answers:

> Through my particular experience of blackness, I encounter the symbolic significance of black existence and how that existence is related to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. In the divine-human encounter, the particular experience of oppression and liberation, as disclosed in black-skinned people, is affirmed as God's own experience; and through that divine affirmation, I encounter the universal meaning of oppression and liberation that is not limited by skin color.[102]

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98 Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology*, 12.

99 Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 141.

100 Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 64.

101 Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 78.

102 William Hordern, "Dialogue on Black Theology: An Interview with James Cone," in *The Christian Century* (15 Sept 1971), http://www.nathanielturner.com/dialogueonblacktheology.htm

In short, the suffering of Blacks stands in parallel to God's own suffering in Jesus Christ who gave his life for the liberation of the poor.

Arguing against the suffering of Blacks as the point of contact between transcendence and immanence, Anthony Pinn says that this has created a fallacy in Black history for "social transformation because it leads to keeping oppressed African Americans quiet and passive and, on a theological level, exposes God's approval of black people's suffering."[103] However, David Goatley argues for a "God who is present in the testimony of enslaved blacks and the wailing cry of Jesus' crucifixion in Mark 15:34, which indicates both God's absence and presence for the poor."[104] Here Cone's assertion is worth noting. He says, "Jesus was not for and against the poor, for and against rich. He was for the poor and against the rich, for the weak and against the strong."[105] This implies that God in history has always been on the side of the poor, cognizant of the sufferings of the poor and oppressed; this does not mean that God sanctions suffering, as claimed by Pinn, but rather that God stands with those who are weak and poor to fight against all oppressive powers as well.

However, in all this liberation talk, Jacquelyn Grant argues that the voices of women are unheard. If Black Theology of liberation showcases the transformation of all Blacks, then it should be ready to embrace the triple oppression of Black women in the liberative action.[106] The resources of women's lives and spirituality would add holistic expression to the Black theological discourse. The agenda of Womanist theologians is to revive the voices of Black women in all facets of life. Yet their construct of Black women's identity lacks proper portrayal of gender construction within Black heterosexual and hegemonic society.

The Blackness of God participates in the lives of African Americans as a divine ontological gesture happening in the being of God as God is love. If God is Black for his love for Blacks, then God's transcendent nature reaches into the heart of Black liberation out of love. Therefore, the "Blackness" of God unifies transcendence and immanence in his *ontic* fulfillment. However, Anderson argues that the Blackness displays how universal conceptions of "Blackness" fail to do justice to the reality of the Black existence in the contemporary postmodern context:

> Throughout this book [*Beyond Ontological Blackness*], I describe this tendency toward racial reification as ontological Blackness.

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103 Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology*, 107.
104 David Emmanuel Goatley, *Were You There? Godforsakenness in Slave Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).
105 Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 127.
106 Jacuelyn Grant, "Black Theology and Black Women," in *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979*, ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 418–33.

> Ontological Blackness is a covering term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting Black life and experience. In contrast to ontological Blackness, I commend the racial discourse that bell hooks, a leading contemporary African American cultural critic, calls "postmodern Blackness" . . . . [which] recognizes that Black identities are continually being reconstituted as African Americans inhabit widely differentiated social spaces and communities of moral discourse…. However, in many of the cultural studies that I examine, mostly philosophical and theological ones, "race" is often regarded as a topic in metaphysical ontology. In metaphysical ontology, "race" denotes essential properties (essences), such that to lack any one property renders one a member of a pseudospecies.[107]

When Black theology moves beyond ontological blackness, which is the product of whiteness, as argued by Anderson, then it embraces all forms of injustices happening within the Black community without reifying the blackness. Then, only liberation has any meaning for the whole humanity. Horace Griffin poignantly summarizes his argument in the following way:

> If liberation is at the heart of the historical black church as Cone and others claim and if it is to be consistent with Jesus' gospel mandate "to liberate the oppressed" . . . then black heterosexuals Christians must work to end legal discrimination against gays in marriage, employment, and the military . . . and the church teaching and practices that are demeaning to black gays and which contribute to their suffering and death.[108]

Dalit theology, which is accused of being anthropocentric in its theological discourses, can learn from its Black counterpart in the reconciliation of transcendence and immanence within their "Dalitness," without being succumbed to the Brahmanical ontological categories of caste. Because Dalitness in Dalit theology signifies being broken and crushed, concomitantly, it reflects the brokenness of God in Jesus that has an overarching transcendental implication for all humanity. M. E. Prabhakar urges that the "Dalitness" of God cannot be regarded as the passive acceptance of suffering but rather should be seen as ushering in a new culture of life for Dalits and thereby, salvation and liberation from their marginalized existence into God's transcendental self.[109] This new cultural life, in order to have

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107 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness,* 11–12.

108 Horace Griffin, *Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Clevland: Pilgrim, 2006), 216.

109 M. E. Prabhakar, "Christology in Dalit Perspective," in *Frontiers of Dalit Theology*, ed.

transcendent meaning should be iconoclastic and avoid any form of self-referential inconsistencies.

Envisioning a new culture of life can only be possible when Dalit theologians end their silence over the issue of homosexuality and gender biases in the community and display courage to stand for the rights of Dalit homosexuals. If Dalit Christians are not ready to include their homosexual brothers and sisters in their liberative agenda, then their discourse on utopian liberative community will never be holistic. Therefore, what is needed for holistic theology is the balance between transcendence and immanence not only in a strategic relationality (Grenz and Olson's "new Immanence") but also in strategic symbiotic *intra-activity*.[110]

Ecclesiological and Hermeneutical Issues

The Church is the body of Christ, and therefore it should be involved in imparting the nature of Christ to all his believers. If Christ's body is Black and Dalit literally and symbolically, then the Church should also be Black and Dalit. The Church should have solidarity with those who are broken and crushed in the name of race and caste. However, this is not the scenario at hand because oppression continues in the churches at a microcosmic level. The issues of sub-casteism, classism and gender discrimination are still rampant and must be curbed urgently. These issues are facilitated by the new models of globalization and neo-capitalism.[111] If Dalit Christians believe that they represent the image of God and trust that Christ's dalitness is their dalitness, then they need to cease the caste practices in which they themselves indulge. Equally, the divisions among Dalits in the forms of classism, sexism, rural/urban and literate/illiterate distinctions, and different faith affiliations should be exposed and eliminated.

Dalits should unite together and work towards liberation through resistance and at the same time, the churches should become involved in a radical self-critical approach to what it means to be a true follower of Christ. Just like the Black church responded to white oppression in a revolutionary and self-critical way, the Dalit church should be motivated to be a self-critical revolutionary church that stands for its bleeding children. Only then will the church become a

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V. Devashayam (Delhi: ISPCK/Gurukul, 1997), 419.

110 "Intra-activity" here means an intrinsic interdependence of two opposing thoughts in a strategic relationality for a better theological understanding.

111 Neo-capitalism is an amalgamation of different economic ideologies adopted to contain the risk of economic failure during economic meltdowns. It is a new form of capitalism post-World War II whereby the government plays an active role in safeguarding a country's economic infrastructure by rescuing major corporate companies. In other words, when capitalism thrived on the back of private ownership to boost private interest at the cost of people's fair share, neo-capitalism gave a legitimate face to the greedy capitalistic corporate system to hijack people's right to fair labor. Neo-capitalism proposes to expand private enterprise along with social welfare with selective government intervention. But in truth, neo-capitalism is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

prophetic church. Mark Chapman argues in his book that "Christianity on Trial seeks to join the prophetic stream of African-American religious thought, which has consistently argued that black churches must encourage honest self-criticism."[112]

Concomitantly, the Black church was called into existence by God as a protest against white power, and therefore the "church was the sole source of personal identity and the sense of community."[113] Today, Black churches are still in the clutches of color differentiation, as they continue to differentiate between their light black and dark black skin among themselves.[114] Often, the oppressed person comes to believe that somehow she or he can get into the shoe of the oppressor so that she or he will no longer be the object of humiliation. The darker the skin, the more oppressed and marginalized. Victor Anderson, along with Jacquelyn Grant and Delores Williams, critiqued Cone for essentializing blackness, which left the issues of multiplicity in Black identity unnoticed. However, it can be argued that Anderson forgot the fact that Cone rectified the problem of "totalizing discourse" in his subsequent works like *For My People.*[115] A critique of Anderson's view would state that the color of the skin might play a major role in the regulation of oppression in the churches. However, it cannot be taken as standard or founda-tional because it is not reflected in systemic forms and therefore can be contested. Nevertheless, methodology should not succumb to an essentialist category of Blackness but rather should undertake "skin"-related oppression within the Black community as a serious hurdle to promoting holistic liberation for Blacks in America.

The multiplicities of Black identity are not peculiar to Blacks but also exist in the Dalit Christian ethos. It is an undeniable fact that the concepts of purity and pollution and good and evil are incorporated into beliefs about the color of skin. Dark is considered polluted and evil, whereas white is understood as good and pure. Just as the churches of Blacks and Dalits were born out of protest, so should they exist continually in protest. Therefore, Anderson's religious criticism of cul-tural inconsistency is a prospective tool to present "grotesque as heroic…[and] advance a conception of cultural criticism that is at once iconoclastic and uto-pian."[116] In short, grotesque becomes a hermeneutical key for a utopian life.

Interpretation is the interplay between engagement and understanding. Various interpretative tools have been used to interpret experiences of suffering. Dalit

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112 Chapman, *Christianity on Trial,* 172.
113 Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 92.
114 Cf., e.g., "The brown paper bag test." It was a test to allow the color of the Blacks as light as brown to enter to a social event.
115 James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 88–93.
116 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness,* 142.

pathos, therefore, projects a face in the form of the Dalit body, which is a pro-spective tool for the Dalit methodological approach. The Dalit body has always been the arena of discrimination and oppression. It is through the body that the experience of Dalits draws our attention to the historical oppression and thereby retrieves the lost consciousness. Throughout philosophical and theological dis-courses, the body has been held secondary and subsidiary without any worth related to it except as the carrier of mind.

However, in Dalit theology, the body plays a central role in the art of interpret-ation. The Dalit body highlights itself as a broken body inflicted upon by the Brahmanical and colonial agenda. Y. T. Vinayaraj, reading the Dalit body from a postmodern perspective, asserts that "Dalits reject all the colonially imposed imprints/notions on their bodies. By affirming the new social meanings/imagina-tions of their bodies, Dalits reject the casteist traces inscribed onto their bodies and determinedly enter into new and unattached social relationships."[117] In other words, Dalit bodies should wipe away the given social body and discover a con-tested body against the dominant ethos. Moreover, Dalits should understand their body as "text" that tells the story of their age-long discrimination rendered by the casteist tradition. Here, body becomes a text to read and re-read according to their respective socio-political and religio-cultural engagement.

Black theology has seldom addressed the issue of body-related events that inform the experiential knowledge, except in the case of Dwight Hopkins and Anthony Pinn. Their approach to body as a methodological tool provides a sen-sual and erotic view. They asked, "Why has the sensuality and eroticism of the Black body, so evident in Black culture and African American life, remained a taboo topic?" It seems, "they subsume Christian discourse within the broader conversation in both a sacred and profane manifestation of the contentions over what it means to construct the eroticism of black materiality."[118] This view nar-rowed the whole concept of body into a sensual box. However, the methodo-logical approach of Dalits towards body is an inviting paradigm to explore the intricacies of Black body and locate their historical bodily oppression as a text to be interpreted. A theology of body challenges Blacks to re-politicize their bodies and fight for liberation. Nevertheless, this body-talk is not limited only to adult Black men and women but to all who are marginalized, including the children in whom the future rests.

Towards a *Sarvodaya* Model of Inter-Contextual Approach

The term *Sarvodaya* means the "liberation of all." The meaning of *Sarvodaya*

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117 Vinayaraj, "Envisioning a Postmodern Method of Doing Dalit Theology," 100.
118 Dwight Hopkins and Anthony Pinn, *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 117.

lies in its nature of taking all the living beings together irrespective of class, race, caste, gender, sex, species, etc. and working for the liberation of all within a given context. The *Sarvodaya* model welcomes the new generation of theologians not in their commonality of experience, but rather in a commonality of commitment to overcome, root out, and even abolish the discriminatory system. The *Sarvodaya* community is a theological reality where God, humans and other living beings live in perfect relationship and participate in the lives of each other to bring about an egalitarian society. It is a community that critiques any individual or group-based community and deals with it in a holistic way, addressing the issues of each and every life reality. In other words, it is a corporeal model. In this model, all are included as a family to have dialogue and enter the world of the other, thereby anticipating solidarity to the needy.

How can the Church facilitate a *Sarvodaya* model into the life realities of the people? The Church through its vision and mission becomes the foundation for imparting kingdom values to all communities that are drenched in chaos and could thereby become the icon of universal liberation. This mission-oriented vision of the church not only invites the world into a new identification with the downtrodden but also frees them by joining with other subjugated identities in various parts of the world through inter-contextual reading. This can be witnessed in Anderson's critique of Black theology that challenges any "essentializing" discourse and is endowed with conforming differences within the Black community. This presents the oppressed communities with opportunities to reconfigure their own identity by incorporating a global alliance in new and transforming ways. This transformation, according to Anderson, can be initiated through cultural transcendence and iconoclastic precision.[119]

However, because of its utopian nature, it is my contention that Anderson's cultural transcendence is understood as cultural fulfillment that is one-sided (only belonging to Anderson's aesthetic perspective) and lacks epistemological clarity on the linguistic construction in his cultural critical method. It seems that Anderson is dreaming of a community of perfection without any concrete level of cultural and religious solidarity within the community irrespective of class, caste, race, gender, and sexual orientation. The difference is marred with division that has an inexplicable effect on the community's life. Only a community of solidarity with the least can truly destabilize the cultural ascendancy. In other words, solidarity of the shaken can only find its meaning when an epistemology from the broken bodies is taken seriously because body is the door towards the world. And without a proper epistemological engagement with the body, the understanding and function of power in the lives of the vulnerable will not be fully fathomed.

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119 Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness,* 50.

Sally McFague in her book *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* takes us on a journey of an embodied eco-theology. She argues that any engagement with the body is an engagement not only with the idea of God but also with the world around us as presented in nature. She claims that

> We ought to love and honor the body, our own bodies, and the bodies of all other life-forms on the planet. The body is not a discardable garment cloaking the real self or essence of a person (or a pine tree or a chimpanzee); rather, it is the shape or form of who we are. It is how each of us are recognized, responded to, loved, touched, and cared for—as well as oppressed, beaten, raped, mutilated, discarded, and killed. The body is not a minor matter; rather, it is the main attraction.[120]

In this claim, McFague has vouched for two natures of the body. The first is about the body as self and the second about the body in relation to the eco-system and the whole universe. McFague's claim expands my argument of oppressed bodies regarding race, caste, color, gender, and sex to a more holistic perspective. This ecological perspective is based on the idea that the world, including the universe, is the body of God knitted together with eternal relationality. It means that God cares not only for the humans but also the entire universe with its living and non-living bodies.

This body of God model is liberational because God's body is related to the very being of humanity as well as the universe. Any liberation experience in God is a reflection of liberation in the world and humanity. Therefore, the liberation of humanity is the liberation of "the oppressed earth and all its life-forms," and to a certain extent, it is liberation in the being and existence of God itself. Thus, McFague's ecological theology departs from the majority of liberation theology, which is anthropocentric. McFague's incarnational embodied eco-theology offers numerous insights into the very existence of God, humans, and the world. The author is involved in an inter-contextual approach for a just and equitable society. This society holds the kingdom values where all voices are heard and vouch for the rise of all.

Since God showed his solidarity by coming to the world and experiencing the otherness, dismantling the power structure with his "Kingdom ethic," the oppressed can come together in symbiotic union to share God's suffering and act towards liberation without compromising the otherness of God. Jurgen Moltmann argues that Jesus died on the cross not merely as a condemned blasphemer and as an executed rebel but also as one forsaken by God. In his abandonment by God,

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120 Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16.

the son of God becomes vulnerable and takes upon himself also the fate of humanity who has been forsaken by God. Through Jesus's experience of the Godforsakenness, he is bringing those who are forsaken and broken to the eternal love of God. In the Son's cross, God takes this death on himself in order to give those who are lost his own eternal life. In other words, as Jesus being abandoned brings those forsaken to God, in the same way God, who experiences pain in giving of his son to death, comes closer to those who are away from God.[121] This abandonment is drenched in the otherness of God in which solidarity with the oppressed finds its fulfillment. This solidarity is the backbone of any political-cultural-religio-ecological theology of liberation. As Dwight Hopkins asserts, "If Yahweh and Jesus Christ privilege the total freedom of the victims of society, then the foundation exists for an integral political-cultural theology of liberation."[122]

How is the *Sarvodaya* model different from Jesus's "kingdom of God"? One of the most crucial aspects in the realization of kingdom ethic is through the rising of all. Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* model is a rearticulation of Jesus's kingdom values with special reference to the multicultural and multireligious context of India. Gandhi's reinterpretation of Jesus's kingdom of God inspires his interpretation of the social philosophy of Ramarajya (the reign of Lord Rama and the incarnation of Vishnu, under whom the people lived in full prosperity and happiness) that vouches for a liberated holistic society. The uniqueness of the *Sarvodaya* model from Jesus's kingdom values is its openness to make use of other religious traditions of India sympathetically and to appropriate them in social, religious, political and cultural justice for all, including our ecology as well. Justice and the rise of all are important because they advocate for and affirm the value of all life, both animate and inanimate. Although many would argue that Gandhi's *Ramarajya* instilled fear and suspicion and created a rift in the hearts and minds of people, his overall depiction of *Ramarajya* is yearning for a just society with kingdom of God values.

Conclusion

The liberative praxis employed in Black and Dalit theologies is a valiant way to retaliate against their unjust lives under the yoke of a racist and casteist system and to create a value system from "below." These values, which are based upon the real-life experiences of Blacks and Dalits, should not limit themselves to the race and caste struggles in the United States and India but rather should make pathways to inspire and join in solidarity with all those people who face any form

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121 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Open Church: An Invitation to a Messianic Lifestyle* (London: SCM, 1978). See also Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1974).

122 Dwight Hopkins, Black *Theology USA and South Africa: Politics, Culture and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 170.

of oppression. The methodological musing enriches and encourages travel to the worlds of others in a critical and dialogical gesture with a desire to bring liberation to all. The *Sarvodaya* model aims to say "no" to all elements of dehumanization beyond boundaries and "yes" to all those committed to the affirmation of the fullest meaning by achieving freedom of life.

Kerygmatic Centrality and Unity in the First Testament? (II): Evidence from the Deuterocanon of West and East, Including the Scriptures of Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity[1]

Eugene E. Lemcio

Abstract

This article seeks modestly to cite three (and perhaps as many as six) additional books containing an eight-member narrative "form" I first detected in the Tanakh[2] of the Hebrew Bible (HB) over 20 years ago.[3] In so doing, I extend the range of its integrative reach to include the (1) Hellenized Judaism of the Deuterocanon and (2) the prejudicially-labeled "Pseudepigrapha." Both (1) and (2) belong to the wider scope of Mediterranean Judaism and Christianity, including that of Africa.

Introduction

In my contribution to the *Festschrift* for James A. Sanders, I argued that the following components of a mini-recital lace the HB: (1) God (2) promised / swore (3)

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1   This includes the Church of Eritrea. The deuterocanonical books cited below appear in both the Greek Bible of the East and Latin Vulgate of the West.

2   It is not altogether clear how far back the traditional designation of Torah ("instruction"), Neviyim ("prophets"), and Ketuvim ("writings") goes. The medieval "complete" manuscripts use them—the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex. Both lay the foundation for critical reconstruction of the HB.

3   Eugene E. Lemcio, "*Kerygmatic* Centrality and Unity in the First Testament?," in *The Quest for Context & Meaning: Studies in Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. C. Evans and S. Talmon (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 357–73. I had defined "kerygma" as the proclamation of a narrative about God's salvation (pp. 359–61). The article can be accessed on my Academia.edu postings. Lest someone object that the application of the term is artificial, I note that a form of κηρυχ appears at the head of two newly-identified instances of the pattern, the first in 2 Supplements 20. King Iosaphat "proclaimed (ἐκήρυξεν) a fast in all Ioudas" (v. 3). During his prayer, he acknowledged the (1) Lord who (2) gave (3) the land (4) to the seed of Abraam, his beloved—(7) Israel, who had (6) come out of (8) the land of Egypt. (5) God had prevented them from proceeding through the lands of Ammon, Moab, and Seir (vv. 7, 10). A shorter version—with an implied (2)—occurs ten chapters later (30:5–9), this time in the promise of a Second Exodus, as it were. King Hezekias passed a message (κήρυγμα) via couriers throughout all of Israel and Ioudas urging them to turn to the (1) God of (4) Abraam and Isaak and Israel so that (5) they would (6) return to (3) the land (7) the captives taken by (8) Assour [Assyria].

land[4] / covenant fidelity to (4) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob / ancestors (individually or collectively). (5) God (6) delivered / led up / led out (7) his people / our ancestors (8) from Egypt. This two-phased primal story provided the foundation for Israel's communal responses in worship and ethics. Since the sequence of these categories differs throughout the literature (a function of genre, style, and context?), it constitutes an "informal formality." In modern terms, they might be viewed as talking points whose main categories could be noted upon eight fingers and adapted to diverse audiences and circumstances.

Rather than claiming that a single topic permeates Tanakh as the unifying and central element (the quest of most OT theologians),[5] I made the case that this proto-narrative enables several themes to be integrated by a foundational story. I contended for the validity of my proposal because the "form" that I identified is internal rather than externally-imposed by confession or ideology (therefore relatively more objective than subjective), natural rather than artificial, concrete rather than abstract, textual rather than transtextual, detected rather than reconstructed, and compact rather than requiring assembly from large swaths of text.

I showed that the 15 separate instances of the bifocal narrative (which I display according to a stylized format in Figure 1) can be found in all of Tanakh's traditional major and minor canonical sub-units: Torah (where the concentration is heaviest[6]), prophets (former and latter ["major and minor"]), and writings. In the Septuagint (LXX), the contents of the HB are distributed and integrated among "legal," "historical," "poetic," and "prophetic" divisions. Furthermore, the recital is dispersed within "every major era of Israel's salvation history: ancestral call and wanderings, liberation from Egypt, wilderness dereliction, conquest and settlement, monarchy (united and divided, north and south), exile, and restoration."[7] The skeletal story was fleshed out with muscles, vessels, and organs in any number of ways—according to the kind of literature and according to an author's / redactor's point of view. This provided dual benefits: both stability and adaptability. With perhaps a belabored use of alliteration, I also related this "kerygma" to covenant, commandment, code, cultus, calendar, kingship, charisma, cosmic myth, and canon-behind-the-canon.[8]

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4 Nothing is said regarding the governance of the promised territory. The royal-political element is conspicuously absent.

5 See the somewhat dated but still useful survey and analysis by Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology. Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

6 It is significant that this recital occurs in the great Shema: "Hear, O Israel. . ." (Deut 6:4–9). Three more instances of the pattern appear in 9:26–28, 11:8–12, and 26:3–9 (at the beginning, middle, and end of the work). Gerhard von Rad asserted the last of these to be "most important . . . and of great antiquity." See Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 121–22. I focused on the scope of its occurrence rather than on its age, arguing that its range testified to its significance.

7 Lemcio, "*Kerygmatic* Centrality and Unity," 362.

8 Lemcio, "*Kerygmatic* Centrality and Unity," 369–73.

However, instead of reconstructing a history of Israelite religion or a history of its kerygma and creeds in the manner adopted by von Rad (who focused on the Deuteronomistic theology),[9] I stressed the end-product of *Traditionsgeschicte*: the "final" written products of the canon:[10] those that shaped (and shape) the faith and life of the Synagogue and Church. Before setting forth an additional three (and six?) examples—which broaden the ecumenical scope of my investigations—let me register my disappointment that so many scholars continue to employ the prejudicial language of "apocrypha" and "pseudepigrapha" to these and other works. It is obvious that the Roman, Eastern, and African Christian traditions (both Coptic[11] and Ethiopian Orthodox) do not regard the first of the following instances as such; nor do the latter think of the second as anything but scriptural.[12]

2 Maccabees 1 (Figure 1, III)

The recital occurs at the opening chapter of this work (v. 2) and towards its end (vv. 24–29), thus setting the stage for what follows. A few of its elements are repeated. Addressed are Jerusalemites, Judeans, and those in Egypt. "May (1) God . . . (2) remember his (3) covenant with (4) Abraam, Isaak, and Iakob." (5) "[May the] Lord . . . (6) [g]ather together (7) our scattered people; (6) set free those (7) who are slaves (8) among the nations . . . . (6) Plant (7) your people in (3) your holy place." This brings us right up to the Common Era, so far as time of composition is concerned. Furthermore, the drama of salvation history draws near to its apogee in Jesus (according to Christians).

The Wisdom of Solomon[13] (Figure 1, IV)

This work appears integrated by genre within the "poetic literature" of the OT canons in the Roman Catholic West and Orthodox East—including the Orthodox Churches of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.[14] Finding a home among the authoritative documents of Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity, it does several things. It expands the body of sapiential literature, and it enlarges the works attributed to

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9   Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 105–28.
10   These are most evident in the great codices of the mid-4th and mid-5th centuries CE: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus—which lay the foundations for a reconstructed text of Greek Bible in its entirety.
11   http://www.coptic.org/language/bible/bible.htm
12   https://ethiopianorthodoxbible.wordpress.com/ethiopian-orthodox-canon-of-scripture/
13   There are no appreciable differences between the two major critical texts in the passage cited: Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Salomonis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963) and Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta*, vol. 2, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1962).
14   Such integration by genre is also true of the other documents belonging to the Deuterocanon. Only with the Reformation of the 16th century did Protestants remove, collect, and insert them between the "protocanonicals" of the HB and the New Testament (NT), being pejoratively regarded as "apocrypha."

Solomon—more sage than political-military figure: the king who meets the royal ideal set forth in Deut 17:14–20. He is not to be preoccupied by acquiring women (wives and concubines), wealth, and horses (for chariot warfare); rather, he is to be steeped in the Book of the Law acquired from the priest and committed to its obedience.[15] This standard, rendered in Greek as well as in Hebrew, thus became available not only to the Jewish Diaspora but also to the Greco-Roman *oikoumene*.

Although full of advice for a life of piety, the book (at 10:5, 10, and 18–19) is nevertheless firmly rooted in the eight-membered elemental story so central to the "Protocanonical" literature that I had adduced. The "form" stands embedded within a slightly longer but succinct narrative.16 It opens with the creation of the first human (πρωτόπλαστος πάτηρ κόσμου), extends to the first fratricide, and includes deliverance from the flood under Noah. (1) "She also [the Wisdom of God] . . . (2) recognized (3) the righteous man [Abraham according to the context]." (1) She [Wisdom again] (2) "showed (3) him [Jacob, according to context] (4) the kingdom of God."17 (6) "A holy people and a blameless race (5) she [Wisdom] (7) rescued (8) from a nation of oppressors." Verses 18–19 expand upon items 5–8. An account of wilderness wanderings follows in chapter 11.

The Book of Jubilees (Figure 1, IV)

Jubilees (and Enoch) appear between 2 Chronicles and Ezra in the Ethiopian Orthodox OT.[18] Before its incorporation therein, the Covenantors at Qumran had held this work in high regard. Peter W. Flint reports that, composed ca. 160 BCE, Jubilees currently survives in approximately 15 fragmentary Hebrew copies, the texts ranging in age from ca. 125 BCE to 50 CE. They are exceeded in the number of scrolls only by Deuteronomy, Psalms, Genesis, and Isaiah. Such figures testify the extent to which these "sectarian" Jews valued Jubilees during the Second Temple era.[19] Latin and Ethiopic translations have been judged to be literalistic, on the whole.[20] None of the Greek version has survived.

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15 Proverbs 1:8 shows both king and queen instructing the royal son in wisdom.

16 Narrative, though occasionally found in sapiential literature, is not typical of it—thereby making this recital all the more noteworthy.

17 At this point, I am departing from the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), ed. Albert Pietersma (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The translator renders βασιλείαν θεοῦ as "a divine kingdom."

18 See n. 12 above.

19 James C. VanderKam writes, "[W]e have explicit evidence that *Jubilees* was regarded as authoritative both in Jewish and Christian circles." See his "Questions of Canon Viewed Through the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee M. McDonald and James M. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 106. According to William Adler ("The Pseudepigrapha in the Early Church" in the same volume), "Jubilees was not especially well known in the early church before the fourth century. After that time, however, it seems to have come into its own. A measure of the popularity of this work is the matter-of-fact way in which some later Christian commentators quote from the work" (228).

20 Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013), 85–86.

In the composition itself, the "form" appears in two prominent places, both at the outset and towards the conclusion—thereby providing "bookends" to the work. Jubilees begins with a reference to time[21]: "In the first year of (6) the Exodus (7) of the children of Israel (8) from Egypt" (1:1). Verse 7 (see v. 21) speaks of (5) God's bringing them into the (3) land which (1) he (2) had sworn (4) "to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give to your seed a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

The chapters that follow largely expand and expound the "history" of the main protagonists of the recital: the patriarchs (11–45) and Moses (47–50). At 48:8, the narrator states, "(1) And the Lord (2) did everything on account of Israel and according to his (3) covenant, which he made with (4) Abraham . . . ." In the near context, Moses speaks of a joint agency in the Exodus rescue. "And I stood between the Egyptians and Israel, and (5) we (6) delivered (7) Israel (8) from his [Pharaoh's, under the influence of Mastema[22]] hand and from the hand of his people. And the Lord brought them out through the midst of the sea as through dry land" (v. 13).[23]

Excursus

Ecclesiasticus / Sirach

Of course, finding smaller instances of the pattern (either with the patriarchal components [1–4] or the Mosaic ones [5–8]) is easier than locating the full, eight-membered mini-narrative. Therefore, it is with even more caution that I set forth three more individual books, each of them reliant at points on inferences from the context. All belong to the Deuterocanon. The first comes from the Wisdom or "Poetic" material: Ecclesiasticus or Sirach 44:19 through 45:1–5.24 (1) God (2) gave to (4) Abraam's offspring [Isaak and Yakob being cited] (3) an inheritance from sea to sea. That (5) Moyses (6) led out his (7) people from (8) Egypt is implied in the author's claim that God had made him great, a terror to his enemies, and a worker of miracles. Glorified in the presence of kings, he subsequently received God's Law. The darkness (γνόφος) into which God led him (45:5) could be a reference both to the darkness of Mt. Sina (Deut 20:21) and to the deep darkness (σκότος

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21 The translation is by O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees. A New Translation and Introduction," in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 52. It concurs at these points with James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018).

22 Sometimes, this figure appears as Satan's chief demon—at others, as Satan himself.

23 Wintermute, "Jubilees," 139–40.

24 I am relying on NETS, for spellings and terminology. Ecclesiasticus / Sirach 44–50 provides the longest, continuous (i.e., uninterrupted) meta-narrative in all of scripture (six chapters and 164 verses). It ranges from Enoch (Adam being mentioned later in the account at 49:16) to Simon son of Onias (220–195 BCE) emerging from the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement in all of his high-priestly splendor.

καὶ γνόφος) that separated the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Deut 14:20).

Ioudith

The second tentative example (also fleshed out in part by context) occurs in Ioudith (which is found among "Historical Books"). Achior, the Ammonite leader, gives to Assour's (Assyria's) field marshal Olophernes an account of the Israelite legacy in the land (5:1–14). After originating in Chaldea and sojourneying (παροικεῖν) in Mesopotamia, under (1) God's (2) direction (4) their ancestors (3) settled (κατοικεῖν) in Canaan where they became extremely wealthy.[25] Because of famine, they sojourned (παροικεῖν) in Egypt where they were oppressed, having become numerous. After Israel's (5) God had struck Egypt with plagues, the inhabitants (6) drove (7) them out [of the previously-mentioned (8) Egypt], God leading them through the Red Sea into Sina. It is at least interesting dramatically that the author puts this recital on the lips of one of Israel's local pagan enemies for the benefit of its more serious aggressor.

Esther

It is the Greek Old Testament (GOT) that contains the so-called "Additions to Esther" or "The Rest of Esther." Among the textual witnesses to 4:16 (= Addition C, vv. 8–9), are four manuscripts that testify to a version of the full, eight-member form (the Old Greek mentioning not more than seven of the eight). They are most clearly set forth in the Göttingen edition[26] and translated under "ALPHA" in NETS alongside of the LXX. The prayer of Mardochaios reads, "And now, O Lord, (1) you who (2) covenanted (ὁ διαθέμενος) with (4) Abraam," regarding (3) ". . . the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. Do not neglect (7) your portion, which (5) you (6) redeemed (8) out of the land of Egypt." That "inheritance" might do double duty: both as a reference to Canaan—an implied (3)—as well as to God's people. But this is not certain. It would not be politic for the speaker to belabor the territorial particulars of the Abrahamic Covenant since the land of promise at that time belonged among the one hundred twenty-seven nations under Persian rule (1:1). More suggestive is the set of eight reinforcing items found in the last chapter (10:58 = Addition F, v. 9): All the people blessed the (1) Lord who (2) "remember[ed] (ὁ μνησθείς) the (3) covenants [sic] made with

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25 The inheritance of land is not tied either to pre-or post-Egyptian occupation.

26 Also known as "Göttingen L," its origin is disputed. Karen H. Jobes summarizes the alternatives thus: "(a) a revision of the oʹ [Old Greek] text, (b) a second, independently made translation of the MT, (c) a translation of another Hebrew text of Esther of uncertain relationship to the MT, or (d) a midrashic re-write of the Esther story" (NETS, 424). See Robert Hanhart, ed., *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Scientiarum Göttingensis*, vol. 8.3: Esther (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966 & 1983).

our (4) fathers!"27 In this instance, God did not deliver Israel from Egypt; rather, (5) the Lord (6) did signs and wonders [as he had done there] to rescue (7) his inheritance from (8) the dragon, Aman (10:53–57 = Addition F, vv. 1–9). The same reptilian imagery had been used against both the Egyptian Pharaoh and Babylonian Nebouchodonosor (LXX Iez 29:3 and 32:2, Ier 28:34, respectively).28 It is as if the scribes in this tradition, knowing of the fuller form, made a deliberate effort to preserve the recital, both towards the beginning and at the end of the work, and to apply it to the Persian exile. We have here yet an additional example (if Ioudith be allowed) of Judah in captivity during another imperial era. This version of the GOT also provides a parallel witness to the form's embeddedness.

Conclusions

Given the relative abundance of the instances in the HB I have cited, my three firm (plus three tentative) examples may be considered decidedly meager. However, altogether they accomplish a couple of things: (1) They show that we are dealing with a mini-narrative that can unite the OT Scriptures across a broader front than has been realized. (2) Furthermore, the presence of the newly-cited texts within the canons of both the Western and Eastern "lungs" of the Church, including the Orthodox Churches of Africa, is no mean consideration.29 The implications for greater ecumenical dialog regarding the nature of biblical unity and authority ought to be explicated.

Two additional things might be said regarding Jubilees. Its importance for the stream of Judaism at Qumran needs to be given its due. Furthermore, its retention in one tradition of African Orthodoxy should be taken more seriously as a corroborative witness to the unifying center of the First Testament. Whatever might be concluded about the precise meaning and range of canon / Scripture, this much can be said: the foundational recital was preserved in literature that was recognized as authoritative for the faith and life of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity during the Greco-Roman era, including the northeast African Continent—and their Diasporas.30

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27 Covenant references here and below are absent in the LXX.

28 Two dragons appear in Mardochaios' quasi-apocalyptic vision of the addition that precedes chapter 1 and in its allegorical interpretation at the end of the final chapter. One of them is the Seer himself. So, the dragon imagery is not entirely negative in this work.

29 See R. W. Cowley, "The Biblical Canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 23 (1974): 318–23. The author cites varieties in earlier and contemporary canons within this tradition, where the definitions and boundaries are more fluid. Harold P. Scanlin opines that, in Eastern traditions, "use in the liturgy actually helps to define what is canonical." See "The Old Testament Canon in the Orthodox Churches," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology. Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 310.

30 I do not mean to suggest that these are the only instances of the "form" that can be found in the body of literature cited. More might be identified by further research.

Figure 1. The Unifying Center of the First Testament II?[31]

I. Torah / Law / Pentateuch (LXX)[32]

Genesis (50:24–25)	Exodus (6:2–8; cf. 32:11–13)	Leviticus (26:42–45)	Numbers (32:9–11, 13)	Deuteronomy (6:10–12, etc.)[33]
1. God	"God Almighty"	God	God	Lord God
2. swore	gave	covenant promise	swore to give	swore, brought into
3. land	land of Canaan	land	land	land
4. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
5. God	God	God	[God]	Lord
6. will bring up	freed, delivered, redeemed	brought	came	brought
7. you, Israel	Israelites, God's people	ancestors	people	you (pl.)
8. from this land [Egypt]	from Egyptians	out of Egypt	out of Egypt	out of Egypt

IIa. Prophets: Former / Historical Books (LXX)

Joshua (24:1–7, 13)	Judges (2:1)	1 Kings (3 Kingdoms) (8:48, 51, 53)	2 Kings (4 Kingdoms) (13:22–24)[34]
1. Yahweh	God	God	God
2. gave	promised	gave	preserved
3. Seir, all Canaan	land	land	land
4. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau	ancestors	ancestors	Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob
5. God via Moses & Aaron	God	God	God
6. brought, led	brought	brought	delivered
7. your ancestors	"you"	people of Israel	Israel [Northern Kingdom]
8. out of Egypt	up from Egypt	Egypt	Aram [after Egypt & before Babylon]

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31 N.B. The order in the displays is stylized for convenience, the sequence being diverse in the texts themselves.

32 These headings reflect the fact that, although the content of most Protestant Bibles is identical to the Jewish Scriptures in the HB, their sequence and titles resemble those of the LXX, the Jewish Scriptures in Greek—which the earliest Church inherited and embraced in its Bibles.

33 It is significant that this recital occurs in the great "Shema": "Hear, O Israel . . ." (vv. 4–9). Three more instances of the pattern appear at 9:26–28; 11:8–12; and 26:3–9 (at the beginning, middle, and end of the work).

34 In this case, Egypt was not the immediate oppressor; rather, God (on the same pattern) delivered Israel from Aram (or Syria).

IIb. Prophets: Latter / Prophetical Books (LXX)

Isaiah (51:2, 9–11)	Hosea (12:2–4, 8–9, 12–13)	Micah (7:15, 20)
1. God	God via angel	God
2. called & blessed	strove with & blessed	will show faithfulness, sworn, to
3. made many, return to land [Judah]	Bethel [promised land]	[boundaries extended][35]
4. Abraham & Sarah	Jacob [=Judah] & Ephraim	Abraham, Jacob, ancestors
5. arm of the Lord	Lord by a prophet	Yahweh's signs & miracles
6. redeemed through the waters	brought	came out
7. generations long ago	Israel	generations
8. cut Rahab [Egypt] to pieces	up from Egypt	of Egypt

III. Writings / Historical Books (LXX)

Nehemiah (2 Esdras 19) (9:7–11)	2 Chronicles (2 Supplements)[36] (6:5, 25, 38)	2 Maccabees 1:2, 24–29
1. Lord, God	God	God
2. chose, bequeathed	gave	remember
3. land of Canaanite, etc.	land	covenant, holy place
4. Abram→Abraham, descendants	ancestors & them	Abraam, Isaak, Iakob
5. God	God	Lord
6. his people, our ancestors	his people	people, slaves,
7. passed through waters	brought	gather, free, plant
8. from Egypt	out of Egypt	nations

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35 There are many references to land, territory, and geography.

36 2 Supplements 20:3–10; 30:5–9, from n. 3, belong in this category. But, to avoid clutter, I have displayed only a single example from each book.

IV. Poetical Books (Historic Christian Canon, Cont'd) & "Pseudepigrapha" (Canonical: Ethiopian Orthodoxy)

Psalms 105:9–11, 37–38, 42–43[37]	Wisdom of Solomon 10:5, 10, 15, 18–19	Jubilees 1:1, 7, 21[38]
1. God	[God] via Wisdom	God
2. gave	showed	swore
3. land of Canaan	kingdom of God	land
4. Abraham, Isaac Jacob, thousands	righteous men: Abraam & Iakob [by context]	to ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
5. God via Moses & Aaron	[God] via Wisdom [via Moses, by context]	God & Moses
6. his people	holy people & a blameless race	Israel
7. brought out	rescued	delivered
8. from a ravaged Egypt	from nation of oppressors	from Egyptians

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37   The Psalm in its entirety expands upon these two movements.
38   The full pattern also appears at 48:8, 13.

Antisemitism, Violence, and Invective against the Old Testament: Reinhold Krause's *Sportpalast* Speech, 1933[1]

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Abstract

In November 1933, Reinhold Krause, a leader in the pro-Nazi German Christian Movement, delivered a speech to a crowd of 20,000 at the Berlin *Sportpalast*. Krause's antisemitic tirade demanded the elimination of Jewish influences from the Protestant church, calling for the deletion of Hebraisms from hymnody, the rejection of the theology of "rabbi Paul," and the erasure of the Old Testament itself. Ominously, Krause also endorsed excluding Christians of Jewish descent from the churches.

After examining the historical and theological context of the speech, this article analyzes Krause's rhetoric, highlighting in particular the "conflation of hostilities" that emerges in his condemnation of Jewish Scriptures and Jewish people. In conversation with research by Doris Bergen and Susannah Heschel, the article explores the implications of violent rhetoric directed at Jewish Scriptures amid the increasingly violent—and ultimately genocidal—context of Nazi Germany.

In the *Bebelplatz* in Berlin, where Nazi supporters burned thousands of books in May 1933, the cobblestones are today interrupted by a square pane of glass. Beneath this window lies a room lined with empty bookcases, a countermonument to the violent destruction of books that anticipated the violent destruction of the Holocaust. Near this empty library are engraved the words of the nineteenth-century poet Heinrich Heine:

> That was only a prelude: there
> where one burns books,
> one will ultimately also burn people.[2]

This plaque furnishes an unsettling coda to the empty bookcases, suggesting anticipatory parallels between the fire that consumed books and the subsequent murder of millions. Books and people, deemed likewise unacceptable to the Reich, became targets of violence.

This parallel between the treatment of books and the treatment of people applies also to the fate of the Old Testament during the Nazi period. This article explores how the so-called German Christian Movement targeted the Old Testament for exclusion and destruction even as Nazi leadership targeted Jews for exclusion and destruction. As this article suggests, the parallels were not incidental; rather, invective against the Old Testament, in the context of Nazi Germany, yielded violent implications.

Structurally, this article hinges on a "wildly anti-Jewish speech" delivered in 1933 at the *Sportpalast* in Berlin by Reinhold Krause, a leader in the German Christian Movement.[3] I begin by establishing the background of Krause's speech and the *Sportpalast* event: building on historical research, I sketch the German Christian Movement and its anti-Jewish construal of Christianity. Next, I analyze the *Sportpalast* speech, highlighting connections between Krause's anti-Jewish and anti-Old Testament rhetoric. I then survey the impact and implications of Krause's speech, showing how Krause's tirade, especially his attacks against Jews and Jewish Scriptures, proved programmatic for the German Christian Movement. Finally, in conversation with Doris Bergen and Susannah Heschel, I consider the violent implications of antisemitic invective against the Old Testament in the context of Nazi Germany.

Background of the *Sportpalast* Speech:
Historical and Theological Context

The German Christian Movement

The German Christian Movement (*Glaubensbewegung "Deutsche Christen"*), officially formed in 1932, was an influential, pro-Nazi and antisemitic Protestant

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2 Author's translation. The original inscription reads: *Das war ein Vorspiel nur, dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen.*
3 Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, ed. and trans. Victoria J. Barnett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 64.

group.[4] The German Christians, as they were known,[5] "claimed to represent the fusion—even the mutual fulfillment—of Nazi ideology and Christianity."[6] They perceived no conflict between Christianity and Nazism, but—to the contrary—considered these "not only reconcilable but mutually reinforcing."[7] In the German Christian Movement, the content and convictions of Christian faith were remoulded by Nazi ideology, resulting in an oftentimes theologically unrecognizable "Nazi-Christian synthesis."[8]

Institutionally, the movement comprised a "faction" inside the Protestant Church, having never formed a distinct denominational structure.[9] However, despite remaining institutionally within the established church, the German Christian Movement adopted a distinctly racialist ecclesiology. The movement exploited the concept of the *Volkskirche* ("people's church") in a way that, as Victoria Barnett notes, "reconceived the *Volkskirche* as the 'Aryan' church required for an 'Aryan' people."[10] Rejecting classical notions of ecclesial identity, including the efficacy of baptism,[11] German Christians promoted a *Volkskirche* "defined by 'blood' that would embrace all 'true' Germans and provide a spiritual homeland for the Aryans of the Third Reich."[12] This racialist ecclesiology, combined with an unwavering commitment to Nazi antisemitism, fueled the German

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4   German Christian membership reached approximately 600,000 in the mid-1930s, though this figure underestimates their impact, as "they exerted an influence far out of proportion to their numbers" (Doris Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ: The German Christian Movement and the Ecclesiastical Final Solution," in *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999], 43). Susannah Heschel suggests that the impact of the movement may best be gauged by attending to "the location of its influence" (Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life," *Church History* 63.4 [Dec 1994]: 589). Not only did German Christians represent "a cross-section of society," but they also became entrenched in key positions in German churches and universities (see Bergen*, "*Storm Troopers of Christ," 45).

5   In this article, the terms "German Christian" and "German Christians" refer exclusively to the German Christian Movement.

6   Bergen, "Nazi-Christians and Christian Nazis: The 'German Christian' Movement in National Socialist Germany," in *What Kind of God? Essays in Honor of Richard L. Rubenstein*, ed. Betty Rogers Rubenstein and Michael Berenbaum (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 176.

7   Bergen*, Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1.

8   Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 128.

9   Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 3. See also Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 45.

10 Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 246.

11 The German Christian Movement subordinated the doctrine of baptism to Nazi racial ideology. As Bergen explains, "The Nazi worldview posited Jewishness as an immutable, biological fact; German Christians showed they shared that conviction by rejecting baptism as changing the status of a former Jew" (*Twisted Cross*, 42). German Christians made no secret of their rejection of classical conceptions of baptism, even employing their stance for antisemitic propaganda: "Baptism may be quite useful," declared one German Christian poster, "but it cannot straighten a nose" (quoted in *Twisted Cross*, 86).

12 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 42.

Christians' self-definition as an "anti-Jewish church."[13] Construing Christianity and Judaism as opposites and adversaries,[14] the German Christian Movement focused on expunging Jewish elements from Christianity.

The November 1933 Sportpalast *Rally*

Shortly after its formation in 1932, the German Christian Movement underwent a meteoric rise in popularity and influence. Not only was the movement publicly endorsed by Nazi leadership, but it also secured influential positions in the Protestant church elections of July 1933.[15] Building on this seemingly "unstoppable" momentum,[16] the German Christians organized a rally at the *Sportpalast* arena in Berlin. As John Conway notes, the German Christian leadership intended the rally "to initiate a great propaganda campaign" that would "confirm their loyalty and indispensability to the Nazi Party."[17]

On November 13, 1933, a crowd of 20,000 supporters packed the venue, which was adorned with swastikas and pro-Nazi banners.[18] The main speaker was Dr. Reinhold Krause (1893–1980), a high school religion teacher, Nazi Party member, and a leader of German Christians in Berlin. Employing "crude, abusive language," Krause "lambasted the Old Testament" and "attacked the fundaments of Christianity as unacceptable marks of Jewish influence."[19] In the following analysis of his speech,[20] I examine the connections between his anti-Jewish and anti-Old Testament rhetoric.

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13 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 42. German Christians trumpeted this claim explicitly: for instance, Bishop Heinz Weidemann announced that his church was "officially anti-Jewish" (quoted in Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 26).

14 This assertion was central to the German Christian outlook (Bergen, "Nazi-Christians and Christian Nazis," 178, 184 n. 18). The movement expressed this claim starkly in what Heschel calls the "centerpiece" of the Godesberg Declaration (1939): employing a catechetical format, the Declaration asks, "Is Christianity derived from Judaism and is it its continuation and completion, or does Christianity stand in opposition to Judaism? We answer this question: Christianity is the unbridgeable religious opposition to Judaism" (quoted in Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 81; see also "Nazifying Christian Theology," 591 and "Making Nazism a Christian Movement: The Development of a Christian Theology of Antisemitism During the Third Reich," in *What Kind of God?*, 162).

15 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 5–7.

16 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 7.

17 John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933–1945* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968), 51. For another perspective on the purpose of the *Sportpalast* rally, see Rolf Rendtorff, "Die jüdische Bibel und ihre antijüdische Auslegung," in *Auschwitz—Krise der christlichen Theologie*, ed. Rolf Rendtorff and Ekkehard Stegemann (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1980), 99.

18 Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 34.

19 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 17.

20 No audio recording exists of Krause's speech; however, we can nonetheless inspect exactly what he said, and the reactions of the audience, because a transcript based on a stenographical report was subsequently published as a pamphlet: *Rede des Gauobmannes der Glaubensbewegung "Deutsche Christen" in Groß-Berlin Dr Krause gehalten im Sportpalast am 13. November 1933 (nach doppeltem stenographischen Bericht)* (n.p., n.d.). For this article, I have consulted two original copies of this pamphlet. Instructively, the stenographical report recorded not only Krause's

Analysis of Krause's *Sportpalast* Speech

One Volk, One Church: Krause's Construal of the Volkskirche

Krause began his speech by acclaiming the supposed unity of the German *Volk* under Hitler: "*Germans have become one people*," he declared, an event that "God—through the strength of our Führer Adolf Hitler—has brought to pass."[21] Hitler's achievement in unifying the *Volk*, moreover, invited the inauguration of "*a powerful, new, all-encompassing German people's church*," or *Volkskirche*.[22] Exemplifying German Christian adaptation of Christianity to Nazism, the mission of this church was to make Germans into Nazis: "*And most important of all*," Krause insisted, *"we now need but one mission: to remold our German people— without exception and to the depths of their souls—into German National Socialists*."[23] According to the stenographical report, this inducement to align the mission of the church with the goals of Nazism elicited "Very loud applause."[24]

The pro-Nazi *Volkskirche*, Krause continued, required an ecclesial form "*as utterly German as one would expect it to be in the Third Reich*."[25] More specifically, Krause demanded "liberation from everything in the worship service and our confession of faith that is not German."[26] Predictably, for this leader in the antisemitic German Christian Movement, allegedly un-German elements coincided with anything he perceived as Jewish. Krause denounced "rabbi Paul," whose "scapegoat- and inferiority-theology" had led to an "un-National Socialist" desire "to cling to a kind of salvation egotism."[27] Similarly, Krause condemned Jewish traces in hymnody and liturgy, decrying the intrusion of Hebrew words into German worship. "We want to sing songs that are free from any Israelite-isms," he demanded, adding: "We want to free ourselves from the language of Canaan."[28] Anything deemed Jewish, Krause argued, needed to be purged from the *Volkskirche* in Hitler's Germany.

The Conflation of Hostilities: Krause's Invective against the Old Testament and against the Jews

Yet as strongly as Krause condemned "rabbi Paul" and "Israelite-isms," he

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words, but also the responses from the audience, including shouts and applause, allowing us to assess the notably enthusiastic reception of Krause's speech.

21 Reinhold Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," in *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932–1940*, ed. and trans. Mary M. Solberg (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 251. Here, and throughout Krause's speech, emphasis is original: Solberg's translation employs italics to reflect the emphasis (in bold type) that appears in the original pamphlet.

22 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 253.
23 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 256.
24 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 256.
25 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 257.
26 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 257.
27 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 259.
28 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 261.

deployed even more virulently antisemitic rhetoric to denounce the Old Testament, a text he considered "one of the most dubious in the history of the world."[29] In what became a notorious section of his speech, Krause demanded "liberation from the Old Testament with its Jewish reward-and-punishment morality, with its stories of cattle-dealers and pimps."[30] Indeed, Krause pronounced, retention of the Old Testament was utterly incompatible with the German Christian commitment to an ethno-nationalist German faith: "It is not acceptable," he declared, "for German Christian pastors to maintain, 'We continue to stand on the ground of the Old Testament,' while their Guiding Principles say, 'Christianity suited to Germans.' For all practical purposes, the one excludes the other."[31] Krause's message was clear: Germans could espouse the Jewish Scriptures or the anti-Jewish church, but not both.

It is critical, moreover, to observe the correlation between Krause's anti-Old Testament rhetoric and his anti-Jewish rhetoric. At two points in his speech, Krause advocated the exclusion of Jews—or, more precisely in this context, the exclusion of Christians of Jewish heritage.[32] The first occurrence is a brief, extemporaneous reply to a shout from the audience. In response to his denunciation of Protestant opponents' unwillingness to implement the so-called "Aryan Paragraph" for church leadership,[33] the audience shouted, "We don't need any white Jews!" Krause's rejoinder restated—and amplified—the sentiment of the audience: "We don't need any Jews at all in the church," he replied.[34] Krause's second incitement to exclude Jews, which was significantly more detailed and acerbic, emerged from his diatribe against the Old Testament.

Krause's hostility toward the Old Testament blurred into hostility against Jews, as his target shifted from decrying Jewish Scriptures to decrying Jewish people.

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29 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.

30 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258. Though this phrase is frequently attributed to Krause, Bergen locates its provenance in Alfred Rosenberg: "In *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*," she notes, Rosenberg "dubbed the Old Testament a collection of 'stories of pimps and cattle traders.'" Bergen, "German Military Chaplains in World War II and the Dilemmas of Legitimacy," *Church History* 70.2 (June 2001): 232.

31 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.

32 Since German Christians privileged racial ideology over baptismal identity, Christians with Jewish heritage were identified and excluded as Jewish. Regardless of whether these so-called "Jewish Christians" or "baptized Jews" had any personal connection or contact with the Jewish community, the Nuremberg Laws (1935) defined them legally as "non-Aryans." Accordingly, when referring to "Jewish Christians," this article will employ the term 'Jews' in order to present accurately their categorization in both German Christian and Nazi structures and ideologies. As always in this context, terminology is a vexed issue: "We cannot talk about the German Christians without borrowing their vocabulary," Bergen notes. "But we can keep in mind that use of those terms does not imply validation of that thought" (*Twisted Cross*, 4).

33 Krause's speech expressed German Christian frustrations regarding failed efforts to implement this provision in the church (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 89). For a concise discussion of the "Aryan Paragraph" in the Protestant churches, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 128–33.

34 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 256.

He first connected these objects of his revulsion by evoking parallel experiences of "shame": just as a Nazi feels shame for purchasing from Jews, Krause reasoned, so ought Nazis to feel shame from receiving spiritual material—in this case, the Old Testament—from Jews. "*If we National Socialists are ashamed to buy a necktie from a Jew*," Krause argued, "*then we should really be ashamed to accept from a Jew anything that speaks to our soul, the most intimate matters of religion.*"[35] As "Sustained applause" assured Krause of the shared antisemitic fervour of his audience,[36] he pivoted from condemning the Old Testament to condemning Jews.

"It should also be said here," he immediately added, "that our churches must accept no more people of Jewish blood into their ranks."[37] Amid the roar of "strong applause,"[38] Krause specified that he desired not only to prevent Jews from joining the church, but also to eject Jews from the church, including both members and leaders. "We have […] emphasized repeatedly," he railed, "that *people of Jewish blood do not belong in the German people's church* [*Volkskirche*], *either in the pulpit or in front of it*."[39] Then, in language that proved not only menacing but ultimately predictive, Krause concluded this section of his speech with an ominous demand: "Wherever they [i.e., "people of Jewish blood"] are now standing in the pulpit," he intoned, "they must vanish as quickly as possible."[40] Thus, in Krause's invective, hostility toward the Old Testament combined with hostility toward Jews, as the demand to exclude Jewish texts became blurred with the demand to exclude Jewish people: the Aryan *Volkskirche* required both, immediately, to "vanish."

Impact and Implications of the *Sportpalast* Speech

Controversy and Departures

Krause's speech became as famous as it was controversial. Beyond the 20,000 attendees at the *Sportpalast*, his speech was reported in newspapers and journals.[41] Additionally, Krause's speech was circulated as a pamphlet, evidently to function as promotional material for the German Christian Movement.[42] In Protestant Germany, the reaction was largely negative. Barnett describes the "Protestant outrage"

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35 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.
36 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.
37 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.
38 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.
39 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258.
40 Krause, "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin," 258–59.
41 Krause's speech even garnered international notoriety. In *The New York Times*, an article appeared the next day, summarizing his speech ("Revision of Scripture Is Urged on Germans," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1933, 14).
42 The promotional function is indicated by the final page of the pamphlet, which was an application form to join the German Christian Movement. This page was to be torn out and mailed to Krause himself.

that ensued:[43] as she notes, the radical event "opened the eyes of a number of pastors who initially had been sympathetic to the 'German Christians.'"[44]

Especially controversial were Krause's calls to eject the Old Testament, which, Barnett explains, "did not win widespread approval among Germany's theologically traditional Protestant pastors and bishops."[45] As Robert Ericksen notes, Krause's treatment of the Old Testament "gave impetus to the formation of an opposition church structure," thereby intensifying the nascent Church Struggle.[46] Krause's controversial positions, especially his attacks on the Old Testament, resulted in a "wave of departures,"[47] as Protestants registered their dissent by rescinding their membership in the movement.[48] Indeed, so many Protestants left the German Christian Movement following the *Sportpalast* event that, until the 1980s, many historians concluded incorrectly that the movement effectively dissolved in 1933.[49]

Turning against the Old Testament: The Sportpalast Speech as Programmatic
The *Sportpalast* event unmasked unmistakably the extremist convictions of the German Christian Movement. It was a "turning point," according to Wolfgang Gerlach: "For the first time, many Protestant leaders realized how radical the German Christians really were."[50] However, though this realization caused some to part ways with the movement, many—now fully aware of its radicality—chose to stay. When a movement is radicalized, sometimes it is only the radical who remain, which may help explain the surprising impact of Krause's speech for the subsequent development of the German Christian Movement. Antisemitic components of Krause's agenda, at first widely considered excessively radical, became

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43 Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 34.
44 Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 35.
45 Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 37. The ensuing controversy surrounding Krause's attacks on the Old Testament not only embroiled German Christian leadership, but also implicated rank-and-file German Christian supporters. Bergen reports on a letter written by one supporter from Berlin-Wilmersdorf who described parrying accusations that German Christians "want to get rid of the Psalms, the hymnbook, even the *entire* Old Testament" (quoted in Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 126; emphasis original).
46 Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 48.
47 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 44; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 17, 145, and 177.
48 However, disagreement with Krause's speech need not imply rejection of the antisemitic core of the German Christian Movement. As Heschel notes, "Their resignation should not be taken as an indication of their rejection of [German Christian] ideology or opposition to National Socialism" ("Nazifying Christian Theology," 589). One Nazi Party member, for instance, critiqued Krause on antisemitic grounds, accusing him of having demonstrated a "Jewish spirit" in his speech (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 32 and 126). Even Nazi leadership, as Conway explains, chafed at Krause's presumption of National Socialist sanction, concerned that criticism of Krause could "be directed against the Party itself" (Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 54).
49 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 66. See also Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 2 and Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology," 587.
50 Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 45–46.

normalized within the movement. "Within a few years [. . .]," Heschel writes, "Krause's language no longer sounded outrageous."[51] Indeed, Krause's speech soon shaped the German Christian agenda: just as Krause had decreed, German Christians proceeded to marginalize the theological influence of "rabbi Paul"[52] while purging hymnody and liturgy of "Israelite-isms."[53]

Moreover, whereas German Christian treatments of Paul and hymnody were at times perfunctory,[54] the movement fervently pursued Krause's intertwined demands to cast out the Jews and cast out the Jewish Scriptures. In the years following the *Sportpalast* event, German Christians persistently excluded Christians of Jewish heritage; yet in this respect, it was the Nazi regime, not the movement, that finally ensured exclusion.[55] Simultaneously, the German Christians worked to discredit and decanonize the Old Testament:[56] with an approach that was more uncompromising and unyielding than their revision of Paul and hymnody, and more effectual than their exclusion of Jews, the movement implemented Krause's mandate to cast out the Old Testament. Krause's *Sportpalast* speech, and especially his abasement of the Old Testament, thus proved programmatic for the activities of the German Christian Movement: "Krause's speech shocked many, but he was no anomaly," Bergen observes. "To the contrary, his words anticipated the definitive German Christian view of the Old Testament by the late 1930s."[57]

After the *Sportpalast* event, the movement began practical implementation of Krause's demand to remove the Old Testament from Protestant life, as "German

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51 Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 70.

52 Krause's depreciation of Paul "emerged dominant" in the movement (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 158). The German Christians, for instance, undermined Pauline theology by "attacking the notion of human sinfulness as a Jewish accretion to the true gospel" (Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 56).

53 German Christian leadership announced a new hymnal soon after Krause's speech (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 165). This process continued during the Nazi period, culminating in the early 1940s with a hymnal produced by the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life. Fulfilling Krause's demands, it was purged of any Hebrew words or allusions to the Old Testament: "the hymnal," Heschel notes, "expunged words such as 'amen,' 'hallelujah,' 'Hosannah,' and 'Zebaoth'" (Heschel, "When Jesus Was an Aryan: The Protestant Church and Antisemitic Propaganda," in *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack [New York: Berghahn, 2001], 85).

54 On the conflicted place of Paul in this context, see Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 145-46. On the limits of German Christian revision of church music, see Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 170–71.

55 The German Christians imposed exclusionary measures increasingly after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938 (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 97). However, the exclusion that eventually prevailed in the churches did not result primarily from German Christian efforts, but from the Nazi "policies of isolation, deportation, and annihilation" of Jews (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 87).

56 The language of "decanonization" is accurate in this context: the German Christians did not merely downplay or avoid Old Testament texts, but in fact "rejected the canonicity of the Old Testament" (Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 41).

57 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 53. See also Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 145. It should be noted that some German Christians advocated retention of the Old Testament for antisemitic purposes, promoting its utility as the "strongest antisemitic book" (quoted in Bergen, "Nazi-Christians and Christian Nazis," 180). See also Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 170–71.

Christians focused much of their effort to create an anti-Jewish Christianity on the Old Testament."[58] The movement not only removed the Old Testament from liturgical use,[59] but also published an edition of the New Testament with all references to the Old Testament expurgated.[60] As antisemitic critics denounced the Christian faith, including the Jewish origins of the Old Testament, German Christians responded by increasing their efforts, "intensif[ying] their assault on the Old Testament in the hope of exonerating Christianity."[61] In 1939, German Christians founded the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life, which subsequently "orchestrated" the escalating assault against the Old Testament.[62] Then, with war raging in Europe, anti-Old Testament activities peaked: German Christian "[a]ttacks on the Old Testament reached a zenith during the war,"[63] as the movement "lost any ability to distinguish between the Old Testament and Germany's enemies in the war."[64]

The connections between Krause's anti-Old Testament and anti-Jewish rhetoric suggest at once a conflation and a mutual amplification of hostilities. It was his invective against the Old Testament that, as we saw, opened the floodgates of his invective against Jews. This conflation of hostilities against the Old Testament and against Jews was, moreover, not isolated to Krause's speech. Rather, this conflation of hostilities became a broader trend in German Christian rhetoric, especially during Hitler's war of annihilation. In one particularly menacing case, a German Christian writer invoked violent language against the Old Testament in a devotional published in 1940: "Into the oven," he demanded, "with the part of the Bible that glorifies the Jews, so eternal flames will consume that which threatens our people."[65] Thus, this conflation of hostilities, which Krause exemplified, took on more violent insinuations amid the murderous plans of the Third Reich, as rhetoric decrying the Old Testament "merged with the language of genocide."[66]

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58 Bergen, "Nazi-Christians and Christian Nazis," 179.
59 "The Old Testament," as Heschel notes, "was simply eliminated from German Christian religious worship" (*The Aryan Jesus*, 106).
60 For more on dejudaized revisions of the New Testament, see Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 154–64 and Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 106–13.
61 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 149. See also Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 42.
62 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 54. See also *Twisted Cross*, 149.
63 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 150.
64 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 154.
65 Quoted in Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 152. See also "Nazi-Christians and Christian Nazis," 181.
66 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 152. See also "Storm Troopers of Christ," 54.

Invective against the Old Testament within the Broader Framework of Complicity: A Reflection on Violence

Correlating Scripture and Violence

There are multiple ways of relating violence and Scripture. There is violence represented in the Bible, with theological, historical, and ethical implications. There is violence that Christians commit (or refrain from committing) with reference to a mandate from the Bible. What this article describes is something different: violent rhetoric targeting Jewish Scriptures in the context of violent rhetoric—and murderous action—targeting Jewish people. Discussing the consequences of the antisemitic theology promoted by the German Christians, Bergen addresses what she calls "the disastrous implications of anti-Jewish Christianity in the context of a genocidal state."[67] More specifically, for the purposes of this article, how should the implications of anti-Old Testament invective be defined in the genocidal context of Nazi Germany?

A Broader Framework of Complicity

It is valuable to address this question within a broader framework of complicity in the Holocaust, since German Christian leaders who deployed violent rhetoric were mostly not personally perpetrators of violence. As Heschel remarks, the dejudaizing activity of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life "is not the same act as dropping Zyklon B into a sealed chamber filled with Jews."[68] Some Christian leaders did directly participate in,[69] or advocate for,[70] the mass murder of Jews; however, in assessing the implications of German Christian invective against the Old Testament, it is important to acknowledge that many actions that proved disastrous for Jews took place far from actual murders, sometimes in the respectable venues of pulpit or lectern. How, then, can we characterize the broader complicity of the German Christian Movement, especially insofar as the movement attacked the Old Testament?[71]

By fervently promoting its anti-Jewish agenda within the anti-Jewish Nazi

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67 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 224.

68 Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 16.

69 For a discussion of Christian leaders, including some clergy, who participated "as killers" in the Holocaust, see Bergen, "Contextualizing Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Nazism, the Churches, and the Question of Silence," in *Interpreting Bonhoeffer: Historical Perspectives, Emerging Issues*, ed. Clifford J. Green and Guy C. Carter (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 121–22.

70 In 1933, the renowned theologian Gerhard Kittel proposed "extermination" (*Ausrottung*) as a means for resolving the so-called "Jewish Question." As Ericksen explains, Kittel dismissed this option, not for ethical reasons, but "solely on the grounds of expedience," since the "extermination" of Jews would likely prove impracticable (Ericksen, 55; cf. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 9, 185).

71 It should be noted that attacks against the Old Testament, which are the subject of this article, were only one component in the broader German Christian support for violent antisemitism, as "[o]ther German Christian proclamations during the war made no secret of the movement's endorsements of Nazi mass murder" (Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 26).

state, the German Christian Movement effectively weaponized specific aspects of the Christian tradition for antisemitic purposes.[72] Their ideological fusion of Nazism and Christianity was, in its essence, "an anti-Jewish religion that echoed and promoted Nazi genocide."[73] The persistent efforts of the German Christian Movement to dejudaize Christianity, particularly through the elimination of the Old Testament, "both reflected and contributed to the religious and social situation that made the Holocaust possible."[74] That is, by translating Nazi convictions into theological discourse,[75] the efforts of the movement to rid Christianity of its Jewishness bolstered the plausibility, intelligibility, and credibility of the Nazi efforts to rid Europe of Jews.

More specifically, expunging the Old Testament from Christian usage "destroyed one brake to genocide that might have operated in Christian Europe,"[76] as Bergen suggests, by eliminating an historical, spiritual, and theological connection between Christians and Jews. The Old Testament comprised a Jewish artifact at the heart of Christian faith; without its presence, Christians had one fewer reason to question the antisemitic propaganda that pervaded Nazi Germany. Removing the Old Testament "from Christian scriptures on antisemitic grounds," as Heschel observes, contributed to conditions where "there was little basis left for a Christian to affirm Jews or Judaism."[77] The Old Testament, if prominently and centrally honoured as a witness to God's presence amid Jewish life, might have called into question the Nazi ideology of Jewish death.

Instead, the German Christian decanonization of the Old Testament removed this obstacle on the path to genocide. Rather than problematizing the call to destroy the Jews, the German Christian Movement normalized violent antisemitism by pursuing parallel activities. As Nazi leadership marginalized and assaulted Jews, German Christians followed a parallel course, marginalizing and assaulting the Jewish Scriptures.[78] Indeed, since German Christian ejection of the Old

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72 "German Christians found that components of their religious tradition, even those most closely linked to its Jewish origins," Bergen observes, "could become weapons in the attack" ("Storm Troopers of Christ," 41).

73 Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 171.

74 Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 41.

75 Heschel highlights the function of theologians who "translated" Nazi ideology into the register of Christian theology, "translating the Nazi message into religious language" (*The Aryan Jesus*, 173) and "translat[ing] the often inchoate meaning of Nazism into a substantive discourse of Christian ritual and theology" (*The Aryan Jesus*, 16).

76 Bergen, "Between God and Hitler: German Military Chaplains and the Crimes of the Third Reich," in *In God's Name*, 129.

77 Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 70.

78 Bergen's analysis of the reverberation between Nazi antisemitism and German Christian decanonization is relevant here: "Public antisemitism inspired heightened German Christian attacks on the Old Testament; in turn German Christian ideas found resonance in a society that refused membership to those defined as Jews" (*Twisted Cross*, 148). See also Bergen, "Storm Troopers of Christ," 53.

Testament preceded, historically, the deportation and mass murder of Jews, the movement established a conceptual precedent for the eradication of unwanted Jewishness. Dejudaizing Christianity by means of decanonization may thus have diminished the cognitive dissonance of dejudaizing Europe by means of genocide, in this sense contributing to the shocking normalization of mass murder in the Third Reich.[79]

The Conflation of Hostilities in the Context of Genocide

Furthermore, I wish to suggest that violently-inflected rhetoric against the Old Testament helped normalize increasingly violent rhetoric directed against Jews. This developed, as exemplified in Krause's speech at the *Sportpalast*, through what I have called the "conflation of hostilities," as slippage blurred the distinctions between denouncing Jews and denouncing Jewish Scriptures. This conflation of hostilities, functioning to normalize anti-Jewish rhetoric, may have proven all the more damaging due to the societal respect and moral authority accorded to Christian leaders,[80] as clergy and theological faculty denounced the Old Testament in terms that mirrored Nazi propaganda denouncing the Jews.[81] Ultimately, German Christian efforts to cast out the Old Testament legitimated Nazi efforts to cast out the Jews, contributing to a climate where genocide appeared a credible proposal. It is probable that, without any assistance from the German Christian Movement, the Holocaust would have been perpetrated with no less brutality. Nonetheless, the German Christians—and their violent invective against the Old Testament— participated in the broader framework of complicity that made the destruction of Jews a conceivable and convincing option for Christian Europe.

Concluding Note

In 1933, Krause fervently advocated the anti-Jewish aims of the anti-Jewish movement, calling for Christianity to be purged of Jewishness and the church to be purged of Jews. Though initially perceived as radical, his words proved programmatic—especially as he assaulted the Old Testament. If articulated in another time and place, Krause's words might have yielded less destructive implications. However, in 1933, as the antisemitic storm gathered violent strength, and German

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79 The removal of the Old Testament from Christian usage may additionally have set consciences at ease by aligning Christianity with Nazism. As Heschel suggests, "the effort to dejudaize Christianity was also an attempt to erase moral objections to Nazi antisemitism" (Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 16–17).

80 Heschel highlights the disproportionate impact of Christian leadership in the context of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life: "Yet the moral and societal location of clergy and theologians," she writes, "lends greater weight to the propaganda of the Institute; propaganda coming from the pulpit calls forth far deeper resonance than that spoken by a politician or journalist" (Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 17).

81 On theological discourse "mirroring" Nazi propaganda, see Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 13.

Christian scorn for the Old Testament became ever more conflated with hatred for Jews, Krause's invective enflamed the approaching catastrophe. In the early days of the Third Reich, Krause insisted that the Jews "must vanish"; by the fall of the Reich in 1945, Krause's desire had been fulfilled through genocide. Returning to the words of Heine, at the *Bebelplatz* in Berlin, that inscription could perhaps aptly be transposed into Scriptural terms to serve as an epitaph to the *Sportpalast* event:

> That was only a prelude: there
> where one [attacks Jewish Scriptures],
> one will ultimately also [attack Jewish people].

John: The Nonsectarian, Missional Gospel

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For many people, reading (or writing) this essay would seem to be a waste of time, an exercise in stating the obvious.[1] After all, a plain-sense reading of the Fourth Gospel would note, and perhaps even stress, such clear missional texts as John 17:18 and 20:21:[2]

> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (17:18)

> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (20:21)

To these we could add other missional elements of the Gospel, not least the following:

- The very activity of Jesus as he interacts and dialogues with various figures and groups.
- The frequent use of words like "signs" as well as "work" and "works" to describe some of this activity.
- The pervasive use of two verbs for sending, *pempō* and *apostellō*.
- The frequent calls to faith/belief, and the summary of the Gospel's purpose in 20:31—"But these [accounts of signs] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."[3]

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2   All Scripture quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.
3   Even if the NRSV's "come to believe" should be rendered "continue to believe," this verse would still indicate a missional purpose for the Gospel. We shall return to this question later.

- The role of witnesses and witnessing, ascribed to the disciples, the beneficiaries of Jesus' activity, and the Spirit.
- The miniature mission discourse in 4:34–38.
- The entirety of Jesus' prayer in chapter 17, which calls for unity for the sake of witness.
- The fishing scene in chapter 21, similar in character to the scenes in the Synoptic Gospels of Jesus calling disciples to fish for people.

The Problem

So what is the problem? Part of the issue here is semantic: What do we—whoever "we" happens to be—mean by the word "mission" or "missional," and what do we mean by the words "sect" and "sectarian," and their implied opposites? Does mission mean evangelism? Deeds of loving service? Is it exclusively focused on those outside the community? Does "sect" mean an isolated community that deliberately lives apart from society with distinctive values and practices that it hopes to maintain, with a more-or-less disdainful attitude toward the larger world? Or is it a "contrast society" that interacts with the world but with distinctive values and practices that it hopes to share with others?[4]

But the problem is much more than semantic; it is substantive. We need to hear, or perhaps rehear, the charges against the Fourth Gospel made by some of its interpreters. These charges are typically couched in terms of "ethics," but they clearly relate in significant ways to anything we might think of as "mission." For example, the great Yale scholar Wayne Meeks once wrote that this Gospel

> defines and vindicates the existence of the community that evidently sees itself as unique, alien from its world, under attack, misunderstood, but living in unity with Christ and through him with God. It could hardly be regarded as a missionary tract. . . . It provided a symbolic universe which gave religious legitimacy, a theodicy, to the group's actual isolation from the larger society.[5]

Years later, unrepentant, Meeks wrote that "the Fourth Gospel meets none of our expectations about the way ethics should be constructed,"[6] for the "only rule [of

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4   I intentionally use these rather informal definitions because many who charge the Fourth Gospel (or the community that produced it) with "sectarianism" do not use technical definitions of "sect" from sociologists of religion.

5   Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 44–72 (here 70).

6   Wayne A. Meeks, "The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: WJK, 1996), 317–26 (here 320).

the Johannine Jesus] is 'love one another,' and that rule is both vague in its application and narrowly circumscribed, being limited solely to those who are firmly within the Johannine circle."[7]

More radical still are the words of Jack Sanders, who famously and disparagingly compared John with certain kinds of modern evangelistically minded groups that, in his opinion, were hardly Christian:

> Precisely because such groups, however, now exist in sufficient abundance to be visible, perhaps the *weakness and moral bankruptcy* of the Johannine ethics can be seen more clearly. Here is not a Christianity that considers that loving is the same as fulfilling the law (Paul) or that the good Samaritan parable represents a demand (Luke) to stop and render even first aid to the man who has been robbed, beaten, and left there for dead. Johannine Christianity is interested only in whether he believes. "Are you saved, brother?" the Johannine Christian asks the man bleeding to death on the side of the road. "Are you concerned about your soul?" "Do you believe that Jesus is the one who came down from God?" "If you believe, you will have eternal life," promises the Johannine Christian, while the dying man's blood stains the ground.[8]

Sanders here implies that John is a dangerous text, not truly representative of Jesus and his concerns known from other parts of the New Testament, and unworthy of its canonical status.

Lest we think that such disparaging (what some might call "heretical") words are found only on the lips of certain kinds of so-called critical scholars, we should recall the words of evangelical scholar Robert Gundry, in his 2002 book *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian*. He wrote, "Just as Jesus the Word spoke God's word to the world, then, so Jesus' disciples are to do. But they are not to love the unbelieving world any more than Jesus did. . . . It is enough to love one another and dangerous to love worldlings."[9] Unlike Meeks and Sanders, however, for theological reasons Gundry found John's alleged sectarianism positive.

These sample texts emerged from, and represent a cluster of conclusions about, the Fourth Gospel that we cannot explore at length here. In sum, they build on a

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7   Meeks, "Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist," 318.

8   Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 99–100; emphasis added. While it is true that Sanders hardly had a major impact on Johannine studies, the attitude expressed in this excerpt—though extreme—is not unique to Sanders. It is quoted (with disapproval), for instance, by Richard Hays in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 139

9   Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian: A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelicalism, Especially Its Elites, in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 61.

general critical consensus about the Johannine community that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century under the influence of J. Louis Martyn, Raymond Brown, Meeks, and others.[10] That consensus depicted the Johannine community, either as the Gospel was being produced or at the time of its final redaction, as a community that had experienced conflict with, and likely expulsion from, the synagogue (see *aposynagōgos*; 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) for its confession of Jesus' being equal to God. The result was a community turned in on itself, a sect in survival mode, at odds with "the world"—whether that world was nonbelieving Jews and/or other Christians and/or everyone—"outsiders." Hence the concern for internal cohesion and mutual love, and the (alleged) lack of concern for neighbors and enemies. Not everyone who accepts this sort of historical reconstruction (which, it must be said, has been challenged for numerous reasons[11]) used or uses the word "sect." Raymond Brown ultimately did not, because he did not believe the Johannine community broke fellowship with other Christians.[12] But it is in this sense of a community turned in on itself that most students of John who do use the word "sect" and "sectarian" in reference to John utilize that language, and it is this sense that I will oppose its applicability to the Fourth Gospel.[13]

Winds of Change

There is already movement from others in the direction this essay seeks to go. In the introduction to an important book on recovering the ethics of John, Christopher Skinner suggests that there are three approaches to Johannine ethics:[14] (1) they do not exist; (2) they are "sectarian, exclusive, negative, or oppositional"[15]; and (3) they are "broad, inclusive, or valuable . . . for Christian ethics,"[16] even if often implicit. The majority view, I would suggest is option (2), but sometimes those who seem to deny the existence of any ethic—option (1)—actually allow for a

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10 See, e.g., J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Lives, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979); and Meeks, "The Man from Heaven."

11 See, e.g., David A. Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings*, LNTS 47 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).

12 Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 88–91.

13 I should note that not all studies of John that focus on historical reconstruction dismiss the notion of mission, either historically, with reference to the first century, or theologically, with reference to today. Raymond Brown says, "By all means Christians must keep trying in various ways to bear a testimony about Christ to the world, but they should not be astounded if they relive in part the Johannine experience [of resistance to the testimony]" (*Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 66).

14 Christopher W. Skinner, "Introduction: (How) Can We Talk About Johannine Ethics? Looking Back and Moving Forward," in *Johannine Ethics: The Moral World of the Gospel and Epistles of John*, ed. Sherri Brown and Christopher W. Skinner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), xvii–xxxvi.

15 Skinner, "Introduction," xviii.

16 Skinner, "Introduction," xxv.

sectarian morality.[17] In essence, then, there are two main approaches, options (2) and (3), the "sectarian" and the "robust but sometimes implicit" approaches.

Regarding option (2), the sectarian interpretation, Skinner says that recent studies of John have produced "countless . . . denunciations of Johannine ethics"[18] similar to those I have noted earlier in this essay. If we transition from the word "ethics" to the word "mission," or use both,[19] we will still hear many interpreters repeat the sectarian sentiments. For instance, Alan Le Grys, in his book on early Christian mission, claims that the Johannine community is the "introverted community."[20] The Farewell Discourse is "designed to offer reassurance to a community facing an uncertain changing world," bearing witness to a community that "turns in on itself to retreat from this external threat."[21] Mission comes eventually, in 20:21, but "only at the tail-end" of a process of the community members "com[ing] to terms with their new social environment" after the "unwelcome experience of regrouping" after Jesus' death. This was a community "rather fearful" of mission to the Gentiles.[22]

As for option (3), it is the emerging view of a number of scholars, especially Jan van der Watt, Susanne Luther, Ruben Zimmerman, Kobus Kok, Cornelis Bennema, Asish Thomas Koshy, Sookgoo Shin, and the present author.[23] Some of these authors speak primarily about ethics, but many of their concerns and perspectives echo scholars who use explicitly missional language. For option (3), Skinner points to a representative article by Kobus Kok arguing for a

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17 E.g., John P. Meier, cited by Skinner, "Introduction," xix: "Apart from the love that imitates Jesus' love for his own, John's Gospel is practically *amoral*. We look in vain for the equivalents of Jesus' teaching on divorce, oaths and vows, almsgiving, prayer, fasting, or the multitude of other specific moral directives strewn across the pages of Matthew's Gospel. Everything comes down to imitating Jesus' love for his disciples; what concrete and specific actions should flow from this love are largely left unspoken." "Love in Q and John: Love of Enemies, Love of One Another," *Mid-Stream* 40 (2001): 42–50 (here 47–48).

18 Skinner, "Introduction," xxv.

19 As does Kobus Kok representing option (3); see below.

20 Alan Le Grys, *Preaching to the Nations: The Origins of Mission In the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1998), 164.

21 Le Grys, *Preaching to the Nations*, 166.

22 Le Grys, *Preaching to the Nations*, 167.

23 See, e.g., various essays in Jan G. van der Watt, ed., *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, BZNW 141 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006) and in Ruben Zimmerman, Jan G. van der Watt, and Susanne Luther, eds., *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, WUNT 2/296 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); most of the essays in Brown and Skinner, *Johannine Ethics*; the entirety of Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmerman, eds., *Rethinking the Ethics of John: "Implicit Ethics" in the Johannine Writings*, WUNT 1/291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Cornelis Bennema, *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature: A Study in Johannine Ethics*, LNTS 498 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017); Asish Thomas Koshy, *Identity, Mission, and Community: A Study of the Johannine Resurrection Narrative*, Biblical Hermeneutics Rediscovered 11 (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2018); Sookgoo Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress*, Bib Int 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2019); and Gorman, *Abide and Go*. See also Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

"missional-incarnational ethos" in the narrative of John.[24] Like many studies of mission in John,[25] Kok's study begins in John 4 and widens out. He concludes that this missional-incarnational ethos

> will transcend all boundaries (cultural, social, economical, racial, etc.) to show love and be accepting of everyone. . . . [T]the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman should be integrated not only with the sending motive and ethos of the Son, but also with the imperative of the missional ethos of the followers of Jesus (cf. John 20:21). Together these elements form an inclusive moral language or ethical paradigm of mission and give the reader a full and integrated picture of the essence of behavior in following the way of Jesus.[26]

Similarly, Sookgoo Shin argues that disciples in John are called to imitate four of Christ's traits: love, unity, mission, and "ex-status" (other-worldliness).[27]

There are, of course, some significant studies of mission in John.[28] Even among

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24 Kobus Kok, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Send You: Toward a Missional-Incarnational Ethos in John 4," in Zimmerman, van der Watt, and Luther, *Moral Language in the New Testament*, 168–93, discussed in Skinner, "Introduction," xxvi–xxvii.

25 See, e.g., Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4.1–42*, WUNT 2/31 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

26 Kok, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Send You,"193.

27 Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John*, 131–91.

28 E.g. Okure, *Johannine Approach to Mission*; Andreas Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel, with Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Köstenberger's *The Missions of Jesus*, though frequently cited in the scholarly literature, has significant flaws, which are indicated by the title's plural "missions." Köstenberger criticizes what he calls the "incarnational" interpretation of mission in John, which sees Jesus in part as a model of service in the world, arguing that such an interpretation underestimates and even "jeopardizes" the uniqueness of Jesus' own mission in contrast to that of the disciples, which is what his book highlights—the "careful line [that] seems to be drawn between the roles of Jesus and of the disciples" (216–17). Thus Köstenberger argues for a "representational" model of mission, in which disciples do not *imitate* Jesus but *represent* him. Their sole similarity to Jesus' mission is their relationship to the sender, "one of obedience and utter dependence," like that of the Son to the Father (217). The disciples' mission, including their "greater works" (14:12) and fruit bearing (ch. 15), is, for Köstenberger, only witnessing to Jesus and gathering people into the church as they offer "the word of 'life in Jesus'" to a sinful world (220). After discussing the greater works of 14:12 (171–75), Köstenberger connects them to the fruit bearing of 15:12 as, in each case, making converts (184–86). Köstenberger's exegetical work and hermeneutical appropriation of it seem to be a reaction against an evangelical interpretation of Christian mission that is more than evangelism, his primary target being the incarnational-missional theology of John Stott. Exegetically, Köstenberger appears to create a huge bifurcation between the first half of the Gospel, focusing on Jesus' unique mission, and the second half of the Gospel, focusing on the disciples' mission. Although Köstenberger's work is now somewhat dated, and although many Christians have found other ways to deal with the alleged dichotomy between service (broadly defined) and evangelism, the issues he raises and the solution he offers—somewhat misguided, in my view—are still in need of careful reflection. To be fair to Köstenberger, in a later co-written book, he does say that mission "proceeds in word and deed" and that the "shape of Jesus' mission determines the shape of the church's mission": Andreas J.

sympathetic readers of the Fourth Gospel, however, mission has often been under-appreciated. Dean Flemming notes that "most recent treatments of the theology of John's Gospel give little attention to the theme of mission."[29] As evidence, he points to two significant and influential works, D. Moody Smith's *Theology of the Gospel of John*, and Richard Bauckham's and Carl Mosser's edited volume *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*. We could add Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*.[30] (This observation, I wish to stress, is not meant to take away from the value of these works otherwise, but simply to note their relative inattention to mission.)

The Present Thesis

So where do we go from here? The most obvious answer is to go back to the text of the Gospel. But even that could be problematic. Teresa Okure points out that certain "overtly missionary passages" in John (such as 3:16, 4:31–38, 17:20, and chapter 21) have at times been assigned to the Gospel's "final redactional layers."[31] The approach taken here, however, is to consider the Gospel as a literary whole, a unity. We will be paying attention, not to the alleged history of the community and the Gospel's supposed corollary redactional history, but to the final form of the text. As Andrew Byers has written, this sort of approach "focuses not on the community that produced John's Gospel, but on the sort of community John's Gospel seeks to produce"[32]—and we may add, "to produce both then and now." That is, we will be reading John as Scripture, and doing so with what has been called in recent years a "missional hermeneutic."[33] Among several possible ways to understand a missional hermeneutic, I propose that it raises three sets of closely related questions:

Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 159–62 (quotes from 159, 160).

29 Dean Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 114 n.3. Flemming's own treatment of mission in John, though brief, is insightful: *Why Mission?* Reframing New Testament Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 53–72. See also Andy Johnson, *Holiness and the* Missio Dei (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 79–104.

30 D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds., *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

31 Okure, *Johannine Approach to Mission*, 34.

32 Andrew J. Byers *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*, SNTSMS 166 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3. Neither Byers nor I wish completely to dismiss interest in the Johannine community but rather to prioritize different concerns in engaging the Gospel.

33 For discussion, see my *Abide and Go*, 2–8 and the resources noted there.

General Questions	Specific, Contextual Questions
What does this text say about the *missio Dei?*	What does this text say about the *mission Dei* here and now?
What does this text say about the condition of humanity and the world, about the need for God's saving mission?	What does this text say about the specific condition and need of humanity and the world *here and now,* in our context?
What does this text say about the nature and mission of God's people as participants in the *missio Dei?*	What does this text say to us about the call of God on us to participate in the *missio Dei here and now?*

The theological tension in the final form of the Gospel, however, is (as we have seen) this: the *missio Dei* and the corollary mission of God's people appears, to many, rather narrow. Although there seems to be a missional thrust in the sense of evangelism rather narrowly understood, to many interpreters there seems to be little or no practical concern for those outside the community or for anyone's material welfare. The logical conclusion would seem, therefore, to be precisely what Jack Sanders said. Or, to put it more positively, what Bultmann said about the mission of Jesus: "Thus it turns out in the end that Jesus as the Revealer of God *reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer*"—in which case, we should conclude, Sanders was basically right.[34]

The argument of this essay is that John is indeed a thoroughly and broadly—one might say *holistically*—missional gospel. It neither reflects nor fosters a sectarian community. Moreover, according to John, the disciples do not merely bear witness to Jesus, represent Jesus, or imitate Jesus. Rather, they abide in him, they participate in him. They therefore participate in what he is doing, thereby becoming like him and like the One who sent him. I will refer to this transformative, missional participation as missional theosis. Some will object to this terminology, but one need not agree with the terminology to concur with the basic argument.[35]

Space permits only an outline of a larger argument, focusing on the Gospel's structure and theme, with a brief analysis of some of the missional texts.[36]

The Argument from Structure and Theme
Structure
For more than a half-century, the Fourth Gospel has been widely understood as comprising a prologue, two "books," and an epilogue. In 1953, C. H. Dodd offered the following outline:[37]

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34 See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament: Complete in One Volume*, 2 vols., trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1969 [orig. 1951, 1955]), 2:66.

35 For a wider discussion of the issues surrounding terminology, and the case that Paul's approach to mission also may (but not must) be called "missional theosis," see my *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

36 The larger argument appears in *Abide and Go*.

37 C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), x, 289–91.

1:1–51	The Proem: Prologue (1:1–18) and Testimony (1:19–51)
2:1–12:50	The Book of Signs
13:1–20:31	The Book of the Passion
	(The Farewell Discourses and The Passion-narrative)[38]
21:1–25	Postscript

In 1966 Raymond Brown outlined the Gospel as follows:[39]

1:1–18	The Prologue
1:19–12:50	The Book of Signs
13:1–20:31	The Book of Glory
21:1–25	Epilogue

Brown's outline has become a standard, approaching quasi-canonical status. It is used, for example, in commentaries by both the Roman Catholic Frank Moloney and the evangelical Protestant Andreas Kōstenberger.[40]

Another approach to the Gospel's structure is to distinguish, with Moody Smith and others, between "The Revelation of the Glory Before the World" in part one and "The Revelation of the Glory Before the Community" in part two.[41] Marianne Meye Thompson, in her commentary, further divides the first major section into 1:19–4:54 as "Witnesses to Jesus" and 5:1–12:50 as "The Life-Giving Son of God."[42] Finally, then, with Thompson, we have an outline suggesting that Jesus and his disciples have a mission. Furthermore, Thompson keeps chapters 20 and 21 together, which rightly works against a natural tendency to underestimate the significance of something called an "epilogue." Interestingly, Richard Hays wonders if chapters 20–21 should be called "the book of the resurrection."[43]

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38 Recently, both Richard Hays and Marianne Meye Thompson have picked up on Dodd's phrase "The Book of the Passion," though Thompson does not use it in recounting the Gospel's structure in her commentary. See Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 79, 129 n.7; and Marianne Meye Thompson, "'They Bear Witness to Me': The Psalms in the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of John" in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 267–83 (here 268). Hays and Thompson would conclude "The Book of the Passion" at 19:42.

39 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols., AB 29–29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970) 1: cxxxviii–cxxxix.

40 Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); Francis P. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998).

41 D. Moody Smith, *John*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 7–10. See also, somewhat similarly, J. Ramsey Michaels (*The Gospel of John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], v–vii, 30–37), who uses the phrase "Jesus' Self-Revelation" rather than "The Revelation."

42 Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: WJK, 2015), vii–x. Another of Smith's students, Craig Keener, labels 1:19–6:71 "Witness in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee" and makes other minor changes to the standard outline but does not question its basic approach: Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012 [orig.: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003]), 1:xi–xxiv.

43 Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 129 n.7.

Without denying the importance of outlines that focus on Christology, I want to suggest a new approach:[44]

I. Opening: The <u>Mission</u> of God the **Father** and the *Incarnation* of the **Son** (1:1–18)

II. The <u>Mission</u> of the **Father** and the **Son** in *Doing Signs and Giving Life* (1:19—12:50)

III. The <u>Mission</u> of the **Son** in *Death* and the Future <u>Mission</u> of the **Spirit**-Empowered Disciples (13:1–19:42)

    a. **Jesus**' <u>Mission</u> Discourse with the Promise of the **Spirit**, and **Jesus**' Prayer of Consecration and <u>Commissioning</u> (13:1–17:26)

        i. <u>Mission</u> Discourse (13:1–16:33)

        ii. <u>Commissioning</u> Prayer (17:1–26)

    b. The Culmination and Completion of **Jesus'** <u>Mission</u> in his *Death* (18:1–19:42)

IV. The *Resurrection* of the **Son** and the <u>Mission</u> of the **Spirit**-Empowered Disciples (20:1–21:25)

Note the key features of this outline:

1. the persistent focus, from beginning to end, on mission (note <u>underlined</u> words);
2. the trinitarian substance of the mission and of the Gospel (note **boldfaced** words);
3. the narrative and Christological continuity of the mission (note *italicized* words);
4. the literary and theological rehabilitation of chapter 21 (in connection with chapter 20); and
5. the choice of the term "Opening" over "Prologue.

Despite the significance of each of these features, space permits me to comment only on the last of them.

The Gospel's first eighteen verses are not merely a prologue or an overture. I agree with many interpreters that they introduce themes and serve as a hermeneutical lens for the entire Gospel. But this passage does more, and it does something different, too. It reveals the narrative and theological starting point of the entire Gospel and the fundamental reality that makes the *missio Dei* what it is.[45] This

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44 This outline is slightly revised from both the original lecture and its published form in *Abide and Go*, 40.

45 Although in his forthcoming essay, "History, Eschatology, and New Creation: Early Christian Perspectives on God's Action in Jesus" (*Canadian-American Theological Review* 8.1 [2019]), N.

originating reality is the eternal intimate relationship and union between the Father and the Son that consists of love, light, and life and into which human beings are being drawn through the incarnation, ministry, and death/exaltation of Jesus.

We will hear more about this fundamental theological reality throughout the Gospel. As the narrative proceeds, we learn more fully what it means that the Son is the living exegesis, indeed the "self-exegesis,"[46] of the Father and is God (e.g., 8:58, confirming 1:1–2, 18). We learn that the relationship between the Father and the Son is one of mutual indwelling, or what the tradition will later call perichoresis (10:38; 14:10–11, 20). Therefore, although the Son is sent by the Father and is his agent, he is much more than that. Andrew Lincoln, although stressing Jesus' role as divine agent,[47] gets to the heart of the paradoxical matter: "In witnessing to God . . . Jesus also bears witness about himself, and in testifying about himself, he bears witness to God."[48] This only makes full sense in John, says Lincoln, because the Gospel affirms that Jesus is one with God.[49] Udo Schnelle makes an even stronger claim: "The central theological concept in the Fourth Gospel is the work of the Father in the Son. It is not a matter of the Father's working through the Son, for the Son is more than an instrument, messenger, or agent of the Father: the Son shares the Father's essential being."[50] Agency, therefore, depends in the case of Jesus on ontology, on his directly sharing in the very identity and character of God. That is why "in him was life" (1:4).

My point here is a simple one: to be drawn to Jesus is to be drawn to God; to be "swept up" into Jesus' life is to be swept up into the life of the God who is love.[51] And that brings us to the Gospel's theme and purpose.

T. Wright uses the term "prologue" but does not use either "*missio Dei*" or "opening," I think the general gist of my argument here is compatible with his approach to John. For Wright, the Fourth Gospel is a new Genesis, a "story of creation and new creation in terms of the fulfilment of the divine purpose [i.e., *missio Dei*] in, for and through Israel." Moreover, as we will see below, Wright and I agree firmly that the divine mission in John means "the *renewal* of the present world rather than its abandonment." Furthermore, in his interpretation of the divine image as a "vocational" picture of humanity, Wright implicitly speaks of the human dimension of mission as similarity to God, which is close to what I mean by "missional theosis."

46 Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 674.

47 E.g., Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, BNTC 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 60–62.

48 Lincoln, *John*, 61.

49 Lincoln, *John*, 62.

50 Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 663.

51 The "sweeping" image comes from Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). This notion of being swept into the life and love of God is, at least in part, what the Christian tradition means by "theosis."

Theme

There are of course many themes in John. I remember the first time I drew up a list of them so that students could choose one to explore in a final course paper—I had dozens. But it seems that the Gospel itself prioritizes one, into which the others fit in one way or another: life. That is, life abundant and eternal. The "life" word-family appears 56 times in John, 50 of them in the first half of the gospel, when the Gospel narrates Jesus' ministry prior to his saving death. Two-thirds of those 50 occurrences are found in chapters 4 through 6, and half of those two-thirds in chapter 6 alone. Jesus is about the business of life.[52]

This Gospel tells us that its purpose is to be an instrument of life: "But these [accounts of signs] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). Is this an evangelistic or a formational purpose? Andrew Lincoln is one of many who argue for translating the purpose clause in 20:31 "in order that you may continue to believe." He contends that a variety of readers/hearers of the Gospel would have needed strengthening, especially in view of the Johannine community's recent experience of various crises (expulsion, etc.), "if they were to bear effective witness."[53] Lincoln's emphasis on the missional dimension of the Gospel's purpose, if his interpretation of 20:31 is accepted, is significant.

It is still possible to add some perspective to this old dispute. The debate sometimes stalls because it deteriorates into an argument between (a) those who think of Gospels as both derived from and addressed to community circumstances and needs and (b) those who conceive of Gospels more broadly as intended for the universal church and/or for use in bringing people to faith (evangelization). This is an unnecessary either-or situation that should be a both-and matter. "John writes," claims Dean Flemming in sync with Lincoln, "to encourage and strengthen the faith of this new generation of believers [i.e., not eyewitnesses], including their participation in the mission of God."[54] That is, believers will be strengthened, will continue to believe/be faithful, which includes being faithful to the missional vocation given to them by Jesus both before and after his death and resurrection. But how will such believers participate in God's mission? They will do so in part by telling the stories of Jesus and of conversion to Jesus that fill the pages of this Gospel. The signs John recounts *did* generate faith and faithfulness, and they may do so again when they are recounted anew. The Fourth Gospel may

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52 The noun *zōē* ("life") occurs 36 times, 17 times qualified by "eternal"; the cognate verb *zaō* ("live") 17 times; and the related verb *zōopoieō* ("make alive") 3 times.

53 Lincoln, *John*, 87–88.

54 Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God*, 113. Flemming, echoing Ben Witherington, thinks the gospel's accounts of people coming to faith may give the gospel and "indirect evangelistic purpose" (114), but I would go further: the gospel is directly evangelistic in its goal of forming an evangelistic, or missional, community.

not be an evangelistic tract, but its content inherently has potential missional value; those faithfully formed by its stories should, and hopefully will, extend the divine life to others by means of both their words and their deeds.

The Gospel's structure and movement at both the macro- and the microlevels reinforce this perspective on 20:31. The Gospel bears witness to a life-giving, life-changing Savior who invites others both to receive that life and to pass it on. And they do, as we see for instance, in the case of the Samaritan woman (ch. 4) and the man born blind (ch. 9). To be swept into the life of the life-giving Savior will include sharing that life with others, both when it is welcomed (as in ch. 4) and when it is resisted (as in ch. 9).[55] *The apparent ambiguity of the gospel's expressed purpose in 20:31 is due to the thick, missional ethos of the gospel.* Like Jesus himself in John, the Gospel text is itself inherently missional, even evangelistic, and at the same time missionally formational of those already evangelized. God's mission involves both drawing people into the divine life offered in Jesus and nurturing them within it. Part of the problem in the discussion of John and mission is that interpreters frequently define mission too narrowly as (some form of) "outreach." They thus fail to recognize that the formation of a holy, unified, loving community is actually part of the divine mission and therefore of the church's mission.[56] Life together is part of life in mission, and vice versa.[57]

Reading John in Concert with Ezekiel

The central leitmotif of life appears, of course, in the various "I am" sayings scattered throughout the Gospel. We will focus on just one, "I am the good shepherd" (10:11, 14), and its corollary claim about Jesus' mission: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (10:10b). The chief intertext for these pronouncements is Ezek 34. We need to note two dimensions of this intertextual phenomenon.

First, Ezek 34 depicts both God himself (34:11, 15, 22, 31)[58] and God's servant/prince David (34:23–24) as the shepherd, with the emphasis on God, who—both rhetorically and theologically—surrounds David:

> "[11]For thus says the Lord God: <u>I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out</u>. . . . [15]<u>I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep</u>, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.[16]I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up

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55   The emphasis on the dynamic of mission in the face of resistance will reappear in the Mission Discourse in chs. 13–17.

56   On this with respect to Paul, see Michael Barram, *Mission and Moral Reflection in Paul*, StBibLit 75 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

57   This claim anticipates the discussion of John 13 and 15 below.

58   See also Ezek 34:6–10.

the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. . . . [22]<u>I will save my flock</u>, and they shall no longer be ravaged. . . . [23]<u>I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David</u>, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. [24]And I, the Lord, will be their God, and <u>my servant David</u> shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. [25]I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. . . . [30]They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. [31]<u>You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God, says the Lord God</u>."

Ezekiel portrays the king as both agent of God and participant in God's life-giving shepherding, a normal aspect of the royal mission in the world on God's behalf. But in calling himself the good shepherd, Jesus assumes both the Davidic role of divine agent *and the role of God*. He is at once human and divine, the David-like agent of God's life and, as God, the very source of that life.

Second, we must pay careful attention to the content of the life promised in Ezek 34. It is certainly abundant, full of good pasture, freedom, security, blessing, justice, and the knowledge of God—an eschatological vision of almost unparalleled riches. We must note, then, that this abundant life is both material and spiritual—though I seriously doubt that Ezekiel or Jesus or John drew that distinction. But we often do. Yet if Jesus is *this* good shepherd, offering *this* kind of abundant life, then the ministry of Jesus is to both spiritual and material needs. Furthermore, if there is a ministry for his disciples like that of Jesus ("as the Father sent me" referring to Jesus' missional *modus operandi*, not just the bare fact of his sentness), it too will of necessity be both spiritual and material.

This observation leads us directly into the question of the signs in the first half of the gospel.

Signs of Life

The significance of the signs in John is frequently misunderstood and underestimated. Many interpreters, both popular and academic, view them as something like "pointers to something other than themselves," because "that's what signs do"—so the argument goes. In the case of the Synoptics, however, we often hear people say that healings and exorcisms and the like are "signs of the kingdom," but we seldom hear anyone say that those things are insignificant in themselves and only point to something else. Not at all. The signs of the kingdom in the Synoptics and, I would argue, the signs of life in John, point *both* to themselves as constituent

dimensions of the larger reality (whether the kingdom or "life") *and* to the larger reality of which they are part. Otherwise, the materiality of Ezek 34 disappears, and the ministry of Jesus becomes a gnostic mission of imparting only spiritual knowledge rather than eschatological life.

I would suggest that this is a hermeneutical misstep rather than an appropriate reading of the text. Linguistically, we have imported a notion of sign from our culture—"signage"—into the text. BDAG, the lexicon, however, rightly gives only two basic meanings for *sēmeion*: (1) "a sign or distinguishing mark whereby something is known, *sign, token, indication*"; and (2) "an event that is an indication or confirmation of intervention by transcendent powers, *miracle, portent*." (Rightly or wrongly, it puts the Johannine uses into definition 2.)[59] More importantly, theologically we have turned the realized eschatology of John, grounded in Ezek 34, into a purely incorporeal, spiritual salvation. It is this kind of gnostic interpretation that Sanders rightly rejects, but this is not what the text of the Gospel conveys if we have good intertextual ears.

Udo Schnelle contends that the signs are "the divine presence in the world." They "illustrate" (so the English translation, but the context suggests he really means "instantiate") "*the saving divine presence in the Incarnate One, who as the mediator of creation created life at the beginning (John 1:3), is himself the Life (1:4), and is the giver of life to others.*"[60] That is, the signs do not *only* point to Jesus as the *source* of the divine life; they are also the *presence* of the divine life.

This "material" interpretation of abundant life may meet with a bit of resistance. It could lead to the prosperity gospel, some will charge. However, if you were living, for instance, in the remote village of Dindi in Zimbabwe a few years ago, where severe drought had left you without any water *at all* for your children and yourself, and no hope for getting any, then perhaps Jesus the source of living water, rightly understood, would also have wanted to give the children a cup of H_2O, probably through the hands of his disciples. This would be a sign of the life-giving presence of Jesus.[61] John does not deny that sort of life-need or Jesus' desire to fill it; he actually feeds the hungry and gives drink to the thirsty.[62] John is like a fourfold interpreter of Scripture. His images are pregnant with allegorical and anagogical, or eschatological, meaning. But like a good medieval interpreter, *John never leaves the literal behind*, consistently implies the tropological (moral/

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59 BDAG, s.v. *semeion*.

60 Schnelle, *New Testament Theology*, 677; emphasis original.

61 This kind of situation is repeated across the globe on a regular basis. Those in North America can begin to identify with this sort of reality in times of natural disaster or in extreme ongoing cases such as that of Flint, Michigan, in the U.S.

62 On this, see the insightful contribution of Harold Attridge in Harold Attridge, Warren Carter, and Jan G. van der Watt, "Quaestiones disputatae: Are John's Ethics Apolitical?," *New Testament Studies* 62 (2016): 484–97.

missional), and always grounds all spiritual significance in the literal—meaning, for John, in the concrete sign.

Moreover, those worried about a material interpretation of the signs that might imply the selfish pursuit of personal prosperity need only wait for the second half of the Gospel, where we find that the abundant life Jesus offers is not without cost, as already suggested in the story of the healing of the man born blind. The abundant life is both demanding and potentially dangerous. It is cruciform, as chapter 13 will say. But it is always material, physical, as well as spiritual. It is *life*, not *escape* from life.

The Argument from Texts

I have argued that the mission of God, of Jesus, and of Jesus' disciples is to "sweep" people into the abundant life of God, a life that is material as well as spiritual—holistic. What I seek to do now is twofold. First, I want to show how for John mission is participatory; this will be a defense of the term "missional theosis," even *cruciform* missional theosis, as appropriate for describing the disciples' mission in John. Second, I want to take two texts, chapters 13 and 15, that could be misread as supporting the sectarian thesis, and argue for their being primary evidence for John's notion of missional theosis. As a preface, I begin with a brief consideration of chapter 4.

John 4

Something fundamental about the disciples' mission is indicated in John 4, where we find a miniature mission discourse (4:31–38) that is sandwiched, Markan-style, into the story of Jesus as a paradigmatic missionary and the Samaritan woman as a paradigmatic convert and missionary. A chain of witness appears here that will place its mark on the Gospel as a whole: the Father has sent the Son who sends the disciples:

> [34]Jesus said to them, "My <u>food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work</u>. [35]Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. [36]The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. [37]For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' [38]<u>I sent you</u> to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and <u>you have entered into their labor</u>."

The missional implications for the disciples and the church are significant. Three things stand out.

- First, *discipleship* is inherently *missional*; it involves being sent.[63]
- Second, Christian mission is *derivative*, an extension of the Son's work, which is itself derivative because it is ultimately the Father's work.
- And third, Christian mission is *participatory*; it is entering into "their labor"—the activity of others. Although this could be a reference to some unnamed group of (human) missionaries, as most interpreters propose, I would suggest that the overall missional theology of the Gospel makes it more likely that these "laborers" are the divine missionaries, that is, the Father, the Son, and (implicitly) the Spirit.

The participatory, derivative, and missional character of discipleship is especially evident in John 13 and 15, to which we now turn.

John 13–15 as Components of the Johannine Mission Discourse

As is clear from the outline of the Fourth Gospel offered above, John 13–17 should be understood as the Johannine Mission Discourse. It is an expansion of 4:31–38. The strongest argument for this interpretation is in the work of Teresa Okure. Most importantly, she notes the parallels, sometimes nearly verbatim, between the mission discourses in Matthew and Luke and what is normally called the Johannine Farewell Discourse:[64]

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63 See (despite the limitations noted earlier) especially Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*, 176–98.

64 Okure argues that chapters 13–17 are an expansion of 4:31–38 (*The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 194–95) before showing the similarities between the Synoptic mission discourses and John 13–17. I have constructed this table in large measure from Okure's list of parallels (196 n. 11), with modifications and additions. Okure implies that the list of parallels is not exhaustive. She wonders whether John 13–17 "might not be the Johannine version of the Synoptic missionary charge" in Matthew 10 and Luke 9–10, referring specifically to Matt 10 and Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–25 (196). The parallels certainly suggest, at the very least, an overlap in concerns. Together with other dimensions of the so-called Farewell Discourse, this overlap becomes part of a compelling case for the centrality of mission in John 13–17. Okure's interpretation (also on 196) of the proximity of the Farewell/Mission Discourse to Jesus' death is that the evangelist "again underlines his position that Jesus alone does and completes the Father's work (17:4)," but that is not the only significance of the literary proximity. It is also the case that the mission of the disciples is to share intimately in the shape of Jesus' own mission, i.e., they will participate in the kind of slave-like foot washing activity (concrete and cruciform) that is an icon of his death and hence of his mission.

John	Matthew and Luke
Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. (13:16) Remember the word that I said to you, "Servants are not greater than their master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. (15:20)	A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! (Matt 10:24–25; cf. Luke 6:40)
Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. (13:20; cf. 12:44)	Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. (Matt 10:40; cf. Matt 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48) Whoever listens to you listens to me (Luke 10:16a)
If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. (15:18) But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. (15:21) Cf. 1 John 3:13: Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you.	[Y]ou will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matt 10:22; cf. Matt 24:9b; Luke 21:17)
Whoever hates me hates my Father also. (15:23; cf. 5:23)	Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me. (Luke 10:16)
They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. (16:2)	Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues . . . . (Matt 10:17; cf. Matt 24:9a; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12, 16) Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death . . . . (Matt 10:21; cf. Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16)
When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. (15:26–27; cf. 14:26)	When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (Matt 10:19–20; cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12; 21:13)

We will see that the distinctiveness of the *Johannine* understanding of mission is that it is *explicitly participation* in the mission of Jesus, which is the mission/work of God, as already suggested by 4:34–38.

John 13

The Mission Discourse begins with Jesus' foot washing and two interpretations of it, one soteriological (13:6–11) and one ethical/missional (13:12–35), if we can separate the two for a moment—though ultimately they are inseparable. There is

a dizzying amount of theological and spiritual activity and energy in chapter 13, but three main points need to be emphasized.

First, what is happening here is a parable or metaphor of forgiveness and self-giving love, but it is also much more. In both interpretations, the foot washing is an invitation to transformative participation at the deepest and fullest level. In 13:6–11, the transformation is effected by Jesus' word and/or his death, and later in the development of the church symbolized by water-baptism. This cleansing also draws the one washed into the death of Jesus, as Paul says of baptism in Rom 6; it is an event of *participation* in Jesus' death. (The new birth by water and the Spirit of chapter 3 already anticipated a connection between water and the cross—the "lifting up" of Jesus.) The word "share" in v. 8 is key: "Unless I wash you, you have no share (*meros*) with me," says Jesus to Peter.

In the second interpretation of the foot washing, the washed ones become those who wash; soteriological participation organically becomes practice, or ethics/mission, as Jesus calls on disciples to love others similarly.[65] In light of the significant linguistic and ethical/missional connections between chapters 13 and 15 (such as the adjective "cleansed/pruned," the noun "disciple," and the verb "do"[66]), we should understand that such ethical/missional activity can only take place by "abiding" in Jesus, clearly a pregnant image of participation.[67] The foot washing "serves to draw the disciples into Jesus' coming glorification [on the cross] as an *incorporating act*," as Mark Matson puts it.[68] It is more like a sacrament, an invitation to *participate* in Jesus' death, both as acted upon and as actors.

Second, if it is God's love that motivates the sending of Jesus to heal and save the world by means of death/exaltation (3:14–17), and if it is this death-exaltation that will draw all people to Jesus (12:32), then it makes perfect sense that the enacted parable of this paradoxical humiliating-exalting death would point precisely to the reality of being drawn into the love of the Father and the Son manifested on the cross. Since Jesus is the "self-exegesis" of God (Schnelle), then Jesus in motion is God in motion; the act of foot washing tells us something profound, not only about the self-giving love of Jesus, but also about the gratuitous, hospitable, kenotic love of God. In this story we enter "'the heart'" of the Fourth

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65 The use of "mission" language here is defended in the discussion below.
66 "Cleansed/pruned" = *katharos* in 13:10–11; 15:3; "disciple" = *mathētēs* in 13:5, 22–23, 35; 15:8. For the verb "do," see further below.
67 For a participatory interpretation, see also Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John*, 106, who refers as well to C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Louisville: WJK, 1978), 441.
68 Mark A. Matson, "To Serve as Slave: Footwashing as Paradigmatic Status Reversal" in *One in Christ Jesus: Essays on Early Christianity and "All That Jazz," in Honor of S. Scott Bartchy,* ed. David Lertis Matson and K. C. Richardson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 113–31 (here 130; emphasis added).

Gospel, where we find "the extraordinary revelation of God—'God at our feet,'" in the memorable words of Brendan Byrne.[69]

Thus the foot washing depicts Jesus drawing his disciples to himself, the source of life, and then, through those disciples, drawing others to himself. The parable portrays an inherently missional Father and Son, an inherently missional cross, and (one would think) an inherently missional, cruciform band of disciples. This parable is an "open" story, one with multiple possible practical interpretations for the disciples. Since foot washing is so earthy, so concrete, it must not be overly spiritualized. Rather, it is like the text of Ezek 34: holistic; material as well as spiritual.

But there is a problem. The foot washing seems limited in scope to the community of disciples: "one another's feet" (13:14). Yet that goes against the theo-logic of the foot washing, which is the icon of God's love for the world.

Third, then, we need to pay close attention to 13:14–16:

> [14]So if I, your Lord (*kyrios*) and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15]For (*gar*) I have set you an example (*hypodeigma*), that you also should do as I have done to you.[16]Very truly, I tell you, servants (*doulos*) are not greater than their master (*kyriou*), nor are messengers (*apostolos*) greater than the one who sent them.

In order not to sound gender-exclusive, the NRSV has pluralized the nouns in v. 16 (*doulos*, *apostolos*) that refer to the role of the disciples. Furthermore, the NRSV does not translate *kyrios* in v. 16 as it does in v. 14. And it renders *apostolos*—which occurs only here in the Fourth Gospel—rather weakly with "messenger." We might therefore better translate v. 16 this way:

> [16a]Very truly, I tell you, a servant (*doulos*) is not greater than that person's lord/Lord (*kyriou*), [b]nor is an authorized representative (*apostolos*) greater than the one/One who sent that person.

The structure of this passage suggests that there are actually two related, but not identical, kinds of foot washing required of the disciples. As servants of their lord/Lord, they are to wash one another's feet (v. 14), an exhortation that is grounded ("For"; *gar*) in the example of Jesus (v. 15) and implicitly repeated in v. 16a, as indicated by the repetition of the word *kyrios*. But v. 16b comes as a bit of a surprise, as the relational imagery changes from lord-slave to sender-sent one. This suggests that the example (*hypodeigma*) Jesus has given in the foot washing is more expansive than simply obediently imitating the Lord by washing feet

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69 Brendan Byrne, *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014), 228.

within the community. Jesus the Lord is also Jesus the Sender, and each disciple is a sent one, an *apostolos*. That is, v. 16b is clearly *externally* rather than *internally* oriented. It is about the "apostle" going out and implicitly washing the feet of others just as the sender-Jesus washed feet not only of friends, but also of enemies and traitors like Judas and Peter. Centripetal (internally focused) foot washing is complemented by centrifugal (externally focused) foot washing. This external focus corresponds, as suggested above, to the fact that the cross, symbolized by the foot washing, is the act of God's love for the world (3:16).

The outward, missional focus of v. 16b is reinforced by v. 20: "Very truly [or "Amen, amen"], I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." The mission of God is achieved by the loving death of Jesus, which creates a beloved community that practices concrete, cruciform love both for one another *and* for those to whom it is sent. That is why, when Jesus repeats the internal-love command, he stresses its missional effect: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (13:35). These words do not mean that love is simply an identity marker. Rather, such love, to use Johannine idiom, is a sign that points both to itself and beyond, to Jesus the source. Even internal foot washing carries external, missional significance.

John 15

In the Scriptures of Israel the people of God are sometimes portrayed as God's vineyard or vine.[70] Musa Kunene suggests that the metaphor conveys two main things, "corporateness" and "covenant": "the corporate existence of Israel as YHHW's chosen people . . . [and] the covenant relationship between Israel and YHWH which embeds the holiness of Israel as people belonging to YHWH."[71] The prophets especially utilize the metaphor, according to Kunene, when Israel has become "fruitless" by failing to practice the covenantal responsibilities, falling instead into injustice, unrighteousness, and idolatry, and needs to obey YHWH once again.[72] Significantly, when Israel falls away from YHWH, "it has thus ceased to be a beacon to the nations."[73] That is, the image of the vine, fruitful or fruitless, includes within it what we might call the *missional dimension* of Israel's vocation. In addition, then, the fruitful vine, along with the fig, could be a symbol of the prosperity and peace of the Promised Land (abundant life, if you will) and, when

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70   E.g., Ps 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–12; 27:2–6; Jer 2:21; 6:9; Ezek 15:1–8; 19:10–14; 17:5–10; Hos 9:10; 10:1.
71   Musa Victor Mdabuleni Kunene, *Communal Holiness in the Gospel of John: The Vine Metaphor as a Test Case with Lessons from African Hospitality and Trinitarian Theology*, Langham Monographs (Carlisle, UK: Langham Partnership, 2012), 46; cf. 48–52.
72   Kunene, *Communal Holiness*, 46, 50.
73   Kunene, *Communal Holiness*, 51.

times were bad, of a better future; similarly, wine could symbolize such hope and future salvation.[74] Implicitly, the better, more fruitful future would include the restoration of Israel's witness-bearing function to the nations.[75]

We find a creative and significant paradoxical tension within John 15 between the main verb, "abide" (*menō*), on the one hand, used 11 times, and the verbs "do" (*poiein*; vv. 5, 14) and especially "go," or "depart" (*hypagēte*; v. 16), on the other. "Abiding" has to do with a deep, permanent, roots-in-the-ground relationship with Jesus. It is as intimate as the language of mutual indwelling, as with the Father-Son relationship of perichoresis. It means being home, resting; it connotes, or could connote, spiritual ease or even apathy. A vine and its branches can certainly bear fruit—an expression used eight times in chapter 15—by staying put.

The verbs "do" and "go," however, have to do with acting and moving. Although healthy vines and branches naturally grow and bear fruit, they do not naturally move from place to place. The disciples, however, have been appointed to go (v. 16). They constitute, in other words, a *mobile* vine, a community of internally, or centripetally, oriented love that shares that love externally, or centrifugally, as they move out from themselves, all the while abiding in the vine, the very source of their missional capability. The image of a "creeping vine" might capture the missional dimension of vine-ness here, though I suspect that what Jesus in John has in mind is still more itinerant.

We may actually find such an image in Psalm 80. Richard Hays, commenting on John 15, contends that the hope of John 3:16, expressing God's saving love for a rebellious world and enacted in the disciples' mission, "is precisely the hope foreshadowed" in Ps 80:11 (LXX 79:11): "It [God's vine] sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the River.'"[76]

In chapter 15, then, we have what is perhaps the most potent symbiosis of spirituality and mission in the New Testament. It is a message that can be summarized in the paradoxical phrase "abide and go." John 15—rooted in chapters 13–14 and further developed in chapter 16 through the end of chapter 17[77]—is the

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74 Kunene, *Communal Holiness*, 46–48, 51.

75 Furthermore, the vine/vineyard motif is related to a broader symbolism of Israel as God's "pleasant planting" (Kunene's term): trees, a garden, etc. (e.g., Ps 1:1–3; Isa 58:11), suggesting both the people's covenant fidelity and God's concurrent approval and presence (Kunene, *Communal Holiness*, 55–62). Themes similar to those discussed in this paragraph continue in the literature of Second Temple Judaism (Kunene, *Communal Holiness*, 20 [citing Walter Brueggemann], 53–73), with perhaps an increased emphasis on the fruit of the vine as symbol of enhanced relations between people and God (72) and greater use of the more generic "pleasant planting" motif.

76 Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 339–40.

77 Chapter 16 contains the means of mission as it depicts the witness-bearing role of the *alter Christus* (14:16), i.e., the Paraclete (15:26; 16:13). Chapter 17 is Jesus' prayer of consecration and commissioning.

quintessence of a participatory missiology. This is what I mean by "missional theosis."

The varied uses of the common verb "to do" (*poiein*) link chapters 13–15 together to give voice to this missional theosis:

- Jesus answered, "You do not know now what <u>I am doing</u>, but later you will understand." (13:7)
- After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what <u>I have done to you</u>? (13:12)
- For I have set you an example, that <u>you also should do as I have done to you</u>. (13:15)
- If you know these things, you are blessed <u>if you do them</u>. (13:17)
- Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but <u>the Father who dwells in me does his works</u>. (14:10)
- Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me <u>will also do the works that I do</u> and, in fact, <u>will do greater works than these</u>, because I am going to the Father. (14:12)
- <u>I will do</u> whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (١٤:١٣)
- If in my name you ask me for anything, <u>I will do it</u>. (14:14)
- Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and <u>make</u> ["<u>do</u>"; *poiēsometha*] our home with them. (14:23)
- but <u>I do</u> as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way. (14:31)
- I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because <u>apart from me you can do nothing</u>. (15:5)
- You are my friends <u>if you do</u> what I command you. (١٥:١٤)
- I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know <u>what the master is doing</u>; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. (15:15)

All of this culminates in the words of Jesus in chapter 17:

> I glorified you on earth by <u>finishing the work that you gave me to do</u>. (17:4).

How do we synthesize these texts? To be sent as Jesus was sent is to be in a

relationship of mutual indwelling with the Sender such that the works one does are the works of the indwelling one. For Jesus, there was an ontological unity with the Father that, in a sense, guaranteed his doing the Father's works. It was impossible for him not to do the works of God. His works were God's works (*erga*), his mission God's mission (*ergon*). Nonetheless, being fully human, Jesus needed to *willingly* do his Father's will. Like Jesus, disciples are in a relationship of mutual indwelling. Jesus has finished his work, as he will say again from the cross (19:30), and yet he continues his work in and through his disciples. But even more than Jesus, since they are not God by nature, the disciples need to depend on him by constantly abiding and praying. As they do, they will share so deeply in Jesus' passion for bringing life to the world that they will become his friends (15:13–15). At the same time, they will always remain his disciples. In fact, disciples will become disciples as they participate in this divine missional life of bearing fruit: "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and *become* (*genēsthe*) my disciples" (15:8; emphasis added).[78] Participation in the mission of God is transformative, and the transformation is toward likeness to Jesus and, therefore, to God.

Conclusion

The argument of this essay has been that John is a thoroughly missional gospel that neither reflects nor fosters a sectarian community turned in on itself and rejecting the world.[79] Rather, it depicts and advocates for a missional community of disciples engaged in holistic, cruciform mission that is both spiritual and material. However, as John 17 makes clear, the Johannine community, both then and now, will be distinct from the world. As Richard Bauckham has said, such holiness (distinctiveness) is precisely so that it can be in mission.[80]

Moreover, according to John, the disciples do not merely bear witness to Jesus, represent Jesus, or imitate Jesus. Rather, they participate in his life and mission, especially giving life by means of cruciform love, and thereby becoming like him. The church fathers got it right: "He became what we are so that we could become what he is." Such a sentiment is the source of the theological theme of theosis, though the tradition has not always understood that our becoming what he is entails participating in what he is doing—his mission.

The language of participation with respect to mission is, to me, wonderfully satisfying theologically. It respects the initiative and activity of God without

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78 The NRSV (like the NAB) gets the sense of *genēsthe* right with "become," over against, e.g., the RSV ("prove to be") and the NIV ("showing yourselves to be").

79 Among others who argue this perspective, see now Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John*, esp. 167–76.

80 Richard Bauckham, "The Holiness of Jesus and His Disciples in the Gospel of John" in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 95–113 (here 113).

diminishing the significance of human involvement and responsibility. The Fourth Gospel bears rich witness to this sort of missional theology and practice.[81]

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81 If this argument sounds a bit like the one I have made in *Becoming the Gospel* regarding Paul, there are good reasons for that. As others have pointed out, Paul and John have some significant similarities. I am adding that each is an advocate of cruciform missional theosis. I *might* like to propose, therefore, that John is actually a Pauline Gospel (uppercase "G"), that John is "channeling" Paul, so to speak. Or perhaps they are simply each channeling Jesus. But all of that would be another essay for another time.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Usefulness of Scripture: Essays In Honor Of Robert W. Wall. Edited by Daniel Castelo, Sara M. Koenig, and David R. Nienhuis. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018. Pp. xxxviii + 246. ISBN: 978-1-57506-960-9. $49.50 (USD).

This *Festschrift* volume serves to commemorate both the 40-year teaching career and 70th birthday of Seattle Pacific University professor, Robert W. Wall. The work opens with a collection of warm "accolades," followed by a short introduction by colleague Davis R. Nienhuis, as well as a 17-page bibliography (containing almost 200 entries) of Wall's published works. The volume is divided into two sections, entitled respectively "Essays on Theology and Methodology" and "Essays on Biblical Texts and Themes."

While interestingly eclectic in their content, the essays contained in this volume generally resonate with the theological and canonical themes Wall has spent much of his academic career thoughtfully and creatively advancing. The opening essay by Frank A. Spina is entitled "Israel as a Figure for the Church: The Radical Nature of a Canonical Approach to Christian Scripture," and seeks to understand both Judaism and Christianity as "twin communities" and figures of canonical Israel (22–23). Andrew Knapp's contribution entitled "The Role of Historical Criticism in Wesleyan Biblical Hermeneutics" synthesizes a non-confessional historical-critical hermeneutic with a confessional theological hermeneutic that, in application to Ps 29, seeks to close the traditional gap between "Bible" and "Scripture" (25, 45–46). Shannon N. Smythe's essay "Reconsidering Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Barth and Goldingay in Conversation" outlines the threefold emphasis upon Christology, participation, and witness found in Barth's Trinitarian theology. It then explores Goldingay's critique of "Christ-centered and Rule of Faith readings" within that Trinitarian theology (48, 67–68). Daniel Castelo's "Inspiration and Providence" offers an interpretation of the honoree's position on the topic, arguing that it serves as a vital though perhaps limited (because of the growing theological illiteracy and cloistering between academy and church) alternative for Protestant evangelicalism (70, 80–81). Anthony B. Robinson writes on the topic of pastoral ecclesiology in his chapter entitled "But as for You: Pastoral Leadership in a Postinstitutional Time." He affirms that the church can

renew its relevancy when confronted by the "tremor of change and challenge" found within a postmodern and pluralistic culture (82–83, 94).

The second half of the volume begins with Eugene E. Lemcio's essay "'Son of Man' in Psalm 8, Psalm 79, and Daniel 7: An Exercise in a Contrapuntal Biblical Theology of the Septuagint" wherein he explores the broader canonical impact these passages may have had upon the Son of Man sayings in the Gospels, and carefully posits the possibility of a theocentric, Christological biblical theology of the Septuagint (111–12). Sara M. Koenig grapples with the multiple Balaam traditions in "Canonical Complexities of the Biblical Balaams," and thoughtfully concludes that, in resisting the harmonization of textual complexities, a canonical reading of recurrent narratives can guard against over-simplification and "monologization" in our hermeneutical approaches (114–15, 133–34). In "The Spirit in Israel's Story: An Antidote to Solipsistic Spirituality," Jack Levison contends that our Christian theology—and especially our pneumatology—is increasingly endangered by the impact of individualism, and that the remedy for this "myopic" understanding of the Holy Spirit lies in the immersion of ourselves in Israel's story and understanding of the Spirit's work in Creation, Exodus, and Restoration (137, 153). Laura C.S. Holmes' essay entitled "Transformed Discipleship: A Canonical Reading of Martha and Mary" places Luke 10:38–42 alongside John 11–12 and elucidates upon how a canonical approach that reads these two narratives together corrects contemporary misassumptions about the women's—and especially Martha's—transformational encounter with Jesus (155, 176–77). John Painter next examines the canonical shaping of the New Testament with specific reference to the Johannine corpus in his chapter entitled "The Place of the Johannine Canon within the New Testament Canon." He subsequently concludes that the differences between John and the Synoptics may highlight a more "comprehensive" and "truer" interpretive portrait of Jesus within the Fourth Gospel (178, 202). The final contribution to the *Festschrift* is Stephen E. Fowl's work entitled "Bound and Unbound Desire" wherein he maintains that contrary to Old Testament and Second Temple texts portraying greed as a *precursor* to idolatry, in Eph 5 and Col 3 the Apostle Paul argues that greed *is* idolatry and that cultivating a disposition of thanksgiving serves as the best counter to greed (pp. 203–205, 220–21). The volume concludes with a sizable bibliography, a contributors list, and both author and Scripture indices.

Whether (a) exploring the "kindred" relationship of Scripture between Judaism and Christianity, (b) redeeming historical criticism for theological exegesis, (c) comparing the nuances of Trinitarian theology, (d) reevaluating the nature of biblical authority, (e) reaffirming the relevance of the Christian church, (f) positing a biblical theology of the LXX, (g) dispelling attempts to harmonize analogous texts, (h) addressing the problem of Christian autonomy, (i) employing combined

narratives to correcting singular readings, (j) examining the correspondence between gospels, or (k) affirming qualities like gratitude in order to make one more Christ-like, each author's contribution in this *Festschrift* highlights some aspect of Rob Wall's wide-ranging scholarship. And while celebrative of that prolific scholarship, this volume also—and perhaps more importantly—serves as a witness to Rob's collegial spirit, pastoral heart, genuine Christian spirituality, and deep theological wisdom.

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Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible. Edited by Michael J. Gorman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. ISBN: 978-0801098390. Xxiv Pp. + 440. $34.99 (USD).

There are many introductions to the Bible, but few with an explicitly global and ecumenical emphasis that also includes considerable attention to interpretation.[1] In a fresh volume edited by Michael Gorman (St. Mary's Seminary), *Scripture and Its Interpretation* delivers just that special combination.

About two dozen scholars contribute to 24 short and easy-to-read chapters. The first section is on the "Bible" itself, the second on interpretation, and third on contemporary experiences related to the Bible. This triad of aspects gives readers a substantial grasp on how the Bible functions in various situations and cultures. Few essays are technical, and all are written with an undergraduate/graduate introductory audience in mind. It could also function as a textbook for committed students at church.

And as a one-course textbook it would certainly succeed in its purpose. Yes, colored pictures and more pedagogical tools would be convenient. But 24 chapters fit a one-semester class nicely (especially a twice-a-week format), and each chapter does end with "Questions For Reflection and Discussion" and a list of recommended reading on each subject (amounting then to many short bibliographies that are quite handy). Depending on how well the first edition is received, the second might easily incorporate the attractive format of other such books by Baker Academic like Powell's *Introducing the New Testament.*[2]

The main (and largest) section on different cultural interpretation was particularly enlightening for readers who haven't quite grasped how the Bible can look and function differently for Christians and churches of a different time/culture. There are also chapters that introductions to the Bible often do not dedicate any attention to, such as reception history, theological interpretation, and the Bible's

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1   A close approximation is Joel Kaminsky, Joel Lohr, and Mark Reasoner, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014).
2   Mark Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 2018.

relationship to politics. The intersectionality of the book's contents is also broken down by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant perspectives on the Bible, and also by different phases of church history (premodern, modern, etc.). Again, few dimensions are left unaddressed, and readers are left with a particularly rich understanding about this marvelous anthology of literature called the Bible.

Scripture and Its Interpretation is unique, highly useful, clearly written, up to date, and enlightening. It is written from a broader Christian perspective and tone that virtually any self-identifying Christian can appreciate. It probably fits best as a text for an introductory seminary course on the Bible, perhaps supplemented by some primary-source readings of biblical texts themselves. Much appreciation towards all who brought this wonderful book into existence. Highly recommended.

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Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon–second edition. Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018. 293pp. ISBN: 978–0–310–53624–6.

Good preaching must be based on a solid, exegetical study of God's Word. In this way, *Preaching God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Preparing, Developing, and Delivering the Sermon*, now in its second edition, was designed to be a companion text to J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays' *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible–third edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). The authors state:

> [I]n *Grasping God's Word* the student learns how to use standard evangelical exegetical approaches to studying the Bible. Throughout *Preaching God's Word* we build on this hermeneutical foundation, making frequent references to *Grasping God's Word* in regard to interpretive issues. But *Preaching God's Word* focuses on communicating God's Word. It reaches students to take the results of their exegesis, develop them into a strong, coherent sermon, and then deliver that sermon in a powerful way that connects with today's audiences. (12)

Prior to delineating any of the specific changes that accompany the second edition of *Preaching God's Word*, it is prudent to first explain the volume's basic structure. The text is arranged into three main parts: (1) Developing and

Preaching a Biblical Sermon, (2) Preaching the New Testament, and (3) Preaching the Old Testament. The first main section involves the "Eleven-Step Sermon Process." This process is comprised of three main components, each with a varying number of steps: (A) *Exegesis* (step one), (B) *The Bridge to Your Audience* (steps two–seven), and (C) *The Writing and Delivery* (steps 8–11). To be clear, the eleven steps are: (1) Grasping the Meaning of the Text in Their Town, (2) Measure the Width of the Interpretive River, (3) Cross the Principalizing Bridge, (4) Consult the Biblical Map, (5) Grasp the Text in Our Town, (6) Exegete Your Congregation, (7) Determine How Much Background Material to Include, (8) Determine the Sermon Thesis and Main Point, (9) Develop Text-Centered Applications, (10) Find Illustrations, and, (11) Write Out the Sermon and Practice Delivery. The seven chapters that comprise parts two and three of *Preaching God's Word* cover the various genres of literature that one would encounter in each of the Bible's two testaments—namely "Letters," "Gospels and Acts," and "Revelation" for the New Testament, and "Narrative," "Law," "Prophets," and "Psalms and Wisdom Literature" for the Old Testament. Many chapters also conclude with a helpful "review questions and assignments" section.

Given that it has been 13 years since the first edition of *Preaching God's Word* has been released, it is, perhaps, quite surprising that the only section that is entirely new to the second edition is "step four" of "part one," namely: "Consult the Biblical Map: How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?" (41). According to Carter, Duvall, and Hays, this step is "a good place to consider how your passage relates to the broader biblical and theological contexts. What are the true biblical parallels to your passage?" (63). Aside from this small (but not insignificant) change, most of the other updates seem to be rather superficial. For instance, the authors state in the preface to the second edition that they have changed their exemplars from individuals such as John R. W. Stott, Eugene Lowry, and Tony Campolo to "contemporary preachers who are setting the bar in biblical preaching—preachers like Francis Chan and David Platt" (15). While these updates are both necessary and good, it is reasonable to state that they hardly warrant the need for a second edition of a text. As something of an aside, perhaps, I was unaware of there being any female expositors that are especially noted.

One specific critique that I have of this volume is the lack of visuals concerning the "Interpretive Journey," i.e., the essence of steps one through five in "Part One" (see above). While *Grasping God's Word* has some wonderfully rendered graphics that depict each of these five steps in a very clear fashion (including a summative illustration), *Preaching God's Word* does not include any of the accompanying pictures that help to illuminate the process. Given the tremendous amount of clarity that these illustrations provide concerning these five key steps,

one can only wonder why the authors chose not to avail themselves of something that would have been such a boon to the reader.

It is also regrettable that there is no specific chapter, nor is there an extended discussion, that is specifically devoted to helping one preach the parables of Jesus. Instead, the authors merely state that "since parables play such a major role in Jesus' teaching, we recommend further study in Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation*" (187). Much also to the chagrin of some readers, there is not much in the way of assistance either for the preacher who wishes to focus especially on the "Apocalyptic" texts of the Old Testament.

Another unfortunate irritant is the rather large number of errors with respect to the author index that appear in *Preaching God's Word*. That is to say, the name index often fails to list a number of individuals whose works appear within the volume (such as Walter Brueggemann, Scott M. Gibson, C. Marvin Pate, Bruce Shelley, and Bruce Witherington III, for example). Alongside this, it also sometimes provides incomplete citations of those authors that it does actually list (for example, both Timothy Keller and Graham Johnston have an incomplete citation index, though I am sure that these examples could easily multiply).

Lastly, although the authors explicitly state that "we have also referenced some of the newest ideas on preaching offered by some of the best thinkers and writers on the subject" (15), there are a surprising amount of monographs and other resources that are dedicated to the discipline of homiletics that are simply glossed over or missed altogether in *Preaching God's Word*. Alongside this, *Preaching God's Word* also tends to refer to older editions of certain texts, even though many newer/up-to-date editions have long been available. These issues render null and void (at least in the eyes of this reviewer) the author's claims to be on the so-called "cutting edge." One also wonders if an annotated bibliography would perhaps have proven beneficial to the reader.

To conclude, for those looking for a preaching text that instructs and encourages preachers to "stand before the congregation having carefully handled the biblical text and incorporated relevant exegetical information into a sermon" (283), *Preaching God's Word* does indeed offer a "hands-on, user-friendly approach to deliver sound biblical sermons with their audience in a meaningful way" (back cover). That being said, however, it is hardly as up-to-date as what it claims to be and one would be hard pressed to justify the purchase of the second edition of this volume if one is already in possession of the first issuing of *Preaching God's Word*. Its primary users will likely be bible college/seminary students, practicing homileticians, and other pastors/ministers.

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Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History. Brennan W. Breed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780253012524. Pp. xi + 206. $60 (USD).

Issues surrounding biblical and interpretation and transmission are well-known, with a variety of solutions and methods of study proposed by scholars. The combination of the study of these disciplines has come to be known as reception history, which, following James Barr, Breed defines as the "history of the effects of writings rather than [their] origins" (3). However, for Breed, this definition does not immediately provide clarity to the discipline, but rather a questionable premise: *can the effects of a writing be separated from its origins, especially in the case of the OT?*

Breed's discussion of this issue occupies much of the beginning of his book *Nomadic Text*. He begins by speaking briefly about the assumption of a gap between the reception history and biblical criticism, which centers on a proposed distinction between composition and transmission of a text. Since such a distinction often centers around the concept of some sort of an original text, Breed transitions into a discussion of the various ways that an original text is understood and defined by various OT text-critical scholars, including Emanuel Tov and Eugene Ulrich. Breed follows some of the arguments often utilized in defense of an original text, including a methodological problem: most text-critical studies, especially those that demonstrate preference for one textual form over another, assume an original text. Ronald Hendel and Ulrich are more accepting of pluriformity of text types, but Breed suggests that both still demonstrate a reliance on the concept of an original text (Hendel more explicitly than Ulrich).

To demonstrate the issues surrounding the concept of an original text, Breed uses the book of Daniel as a case study. He follows Ulrich and others in analyzing the compositional process of Daniel, noting several stages of development taking place before the stabilization of its text. Breed argues that Daniel problematizes the concept of an original text; however, this is not merely because Daniel was involved in multiple stages of development, but that the book exists in two forms, namely the Old Greek (OG) and Masoretic Text (MT). Comparison of the forms to determine the earlier text is not done easily: the MT and OG are not different because one diverged away from another, but rather because both diverged from an earlier common source. Attempting to eliminate these changes to Daniel would result in removing portions of text that would be reasonably considered part of the composition process by any balanced scholar. This causes Breed to conclude that the text of Daniel is "irreducibly complex," sufficiently blurring the assumed distinction of composition and development (53). Thus, the foundational assumption

of reception history being the study of a work after the completion of a compositional process becomes unintelligible when compared to Daniel.

Breed is not interested in simply leaving the fields of reception history and biblical criticism in piles of deconstructed rubble. So he offers his own solution to the problem of the apparently nonexistent line between the disciplines. He wishes to construct a model that allows for the pluriformity of the text while simultaneously not reducing the text to a series of only accidentally connected words and phrases, left to be used and interpreted in ways only limited by the imagination of the reader. To this end, Breed discusses nominalism and realism in accordance with the biblical text and attempts to find a middle ground between the two viewpoints. Here Breed is heavily dependent upon Gilles Deleuze, suggesting that the biblical text should be studied not as a static object, but as an "object-projectile," or an object for which movement should be considered a necessary quality (116–17).

Two concepts prove helpful in the consideration of Breed's theory: speaking of the text having "capacities," and the metaphor of the nomad. On the first, Breed suggests that rather than the text having a singular interpretation, it has several functions that it has the ability to perform. This is not to say that the text may be used to whatever end an interpreter may bring it to; rather, that the text is capable of performing more than one function. Second, Breed uses the metaphor of a nomad as a descriptor for the biblical text: scripture is neither like a native, who stays where they have always been, nor is it like a migrant, who has left its home and gone to a foreign place; rather, it is a *nomad*, who does not have any particular home, nor any particular destination. Rather, it may find itself in many different environments, each equally familiar, and begin to adapt to its circumstances.

The implications of Breed's work for issues like canon and biblical interpretation are significant. Most notably, solid lines between binary categories such as canonical/non-canonical, or in-context/out-of-context would be eliminated, or at least blurred to such an extent that the categories would still need re-evaluation.

Breed's work has one significant limitation, namely the lack of any sort of criterion that would establish legitimate or illegitimate uses of the biblical text. Even if Breed is theoretically correct, it is unclear what sort of limiting factors would be in place to prevent the reader from descending into the nominalism he rejects, allowing an "anything goes" approach. This issue is reason for significant hesitation in the uncritical application of his theory into the work of biblical studies.

However, even given this limitation, Breed's work is keenly aware of the complexity surrounding the biblical text, and more than most, has demonstrated an appreciation for that complexity rather than an aversion to it. Breed speaks tentatively throughout the book, exceptionally aware of the precarious balancing act he

is attempting to perform. Further, even if his reconstruction is not a comprehensive solution to the problems he discusses, his analysis of theories of textual criticism and biblical criticism are thorough enough to force even the most ardent supporter of an original text pause and contemplate the meaning of the biblical text.

While a bit technical, *Nomadic Text* is an excellent read for anyone wanting to learn more about the origins of the OT text and about the complexities surrounding it.

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The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ. Fleming Rutledge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. ISBN: 978-0802875341. Pp. xxvi + 669. $30.00 (USD).

It is hard to think of something more central and important to the Christian faith than the crucifixion of Jesus. The physical cross itself remains a key symbol of Christianity—whether for good (as hanging in a church that embodies the spirit of Christ) or for ill (as imprinted on a crusader shield). But more than that, the crucifixion changed human history—inspiring millions upon millions of followers throughout the last 2,000 years to live lives they would not have otherwise lived. It forever changed the face of our species and has effects on every continent. Indeed, as complicated as interpretations may get, there is no question that human civilization has never been the same.

One of the most prominent preachers of the contemporary English-speaking world, Fleming Rutledge, assembled a lifetime of scholarship and passionate preaching on this event in *The Crucifixion*.[3] It blends a unique mix of theology, biblical studies, and sermon into a systematic whole. Readers will find fresh insights into old debates (such as Anselm on the atonement, Paul and sin, etc.), reflections on contemporary debates (such as justification, substitution, hell, etc.), and vivid incarnations of the incarnate and crucified One—whether on the streets of abolitionist protests, in the killing chambers of twentieth-century Europe, or in the tropics of Rwanda. The cross comes alive in *The Crucifixion*—and with a disciplined, level-headed assessment of the profound reflection. It really is difficult to overstate the value of the book.[4]

Rutledge's intertwining discourse touches upon a noticeably wide array of issues beyond the more obvious contours of history and soteriology. For instance,

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3   As noted in the introductory portions of the book, Rutledge also has notable connections to Wyclif College and Canadian evangelicalism.

4   I was, however, annoyed with some of the "it will preach!" endorsements, since it is far beyond a popular collection of sermon illustrations.

she discusses the general concept of "religion" and explains why "We are on safe ground to argue that the crucifixion of Jesus was the most secular, irreligious happening ever to find its way into the arena of faith" (54), the significance of the fact that "no human wish could have come up with a crucified God" (57), and why "all four Evangelists resisted . . . pressures to move in the direction of something more spiritually familiar, and instead made the long, continuous passion narrative the climax of their work" (69). I was particularly struck by her passing description of the resurrection: "The resurrection is not just the reappearance of a dead person. It is the mighty act of God to vindicate the One whose very right to exist was thought to have been negated by the powers that nailed him to a cross" (64).

Rutledge also chronicles the utter horror and shame of Roman-style crucifixion. "Degradation was the whole point," she writes (78). People have been trying to close their eyes to it ever since.

> One of the telling points made by Martin Hengel is that after Constantine, the word *crux* was sanctified. It fell out of use in ordinary discourse; the word *furca,* meaning "gallows," was substituted. This is revealing, because it shows how the movement is always away from the wretchedness of the cross to something that, however dreadful, is nevertheless not so much associated with the unspeakable as was crucifixion. It also illustrates the way shallow piety attaches itself to the cross and, precisely in the process of reverencing it, robs it of its shame. (82)

Along the way Rutledge also discusses the problem of evil and the whole concept of "justice," intra-Trinity relationships with relation to the cross, the meaning of sin, and on it goes. Practically the whole gamut of systematic theology—and quite a bit of social ethics and philosophy—is brought around the crucifixion. And readers can easily see why: it truly is the centerpiece of Christianity.

To give an example of one of these special topics, consider how she concisely addresses the concept of justice and "satisfaction" in the following paragraph:

> Leviticus 5:14 maintains that one who sins must bring a guilt offering to the Lord "valued . . . in shekels of silver." Note the emphasis on assigning *value* to the offering. The suggestion is that there should be some correlation of the value of the offering with the gravity of the offense. If the supposed sacrifice is just something we are getting rid of, like those old clothes in the back of our closet that we haven't worn for years, then restitution is not made. Anselm's word "satisfaction" seems right here, with its suggestion of comparable cost. We are familiar with this notion; we are

infuriated when people who have committed great crimes get off
with light sentences. The trouble is that there is no adequate pun-
ishment for a truly great crime. How could there be any offering
valuable enough to compensate for the victims of just one bombing,
let alone genocides of millions? (245)

Elsewhere she concludes (after much examination) that "there are free fundamen-
tal premises in the biblical picture of Sin," namely:

1. The Fall—the story of Adam and Eve that tells, in mythological
    terms, of a primeval cataclysm that involves all human beings
    in a vast rebellion against our once and future destiny in God.
2. The subsequent solidarity of all humanity in bondage to the
    power of Sin.
3. A cosmic struggle between the forces of Sin, evil, and Death
    ("the world, the flesh, and the devil," as the baptismal service
    used to say) and the unconquerable purpose of God. (185)

Regarding (2), she highlights that "*Human solidarity in bondage to the power of
Sin* is one of the most important concepts for Christians to grasp" (179; emphasis
original). I found this intriguing because discussion about "sin" is generally known
for being divisive in public discourse; it's a line the divides the believing com-
munity and those outside of it. Rutledge sees it differently. "Sin is an *alien power*
that must be driven from the field. All human beings are enslaved by this power"
(181). In other words, *all people are fellow victims, slaves, and combatants of* this
foreign, deadly influence that holds us in its grip.

> Sin is not so much a collection of individual misdeeds as it is an
> active, malevolent agency bent upon despoiling, imprisonment,
> and death—the utter undoing of God's purposes. Misdeeds are
> signs of that agency at work; they are not the thing itself. It is "the
> thing itself" that is our cosmic Enemy. (175)

This perspective—which she derives largely from the Apostle Paul—takes us back
to *solidarity.* Sin is something that should *unite* the human race, not divide it.

Inevitably, much opinion flows through the arguments, conclusions, and
powerful sermonic interludes. When Rutledge writes that "the cross itself is not a
metaphor," but "a historical event," it is not clear why the two are viewed as
mutually exclusive (212). She also quibbles here and there with various issues
and scholars, whether René Girard on how scapegoating really isn't found in the
NT (248–49) or how N. T. Wright "de-radicalizes Paul" (367) on certain issues
relating to the cosmic effects of sin and downplaying apocalypticism in Second

Temple Judaism.[5] But it is clear that her all of opinions are learned and carefully chosen, and there is never a hint of disrespect in the book's prose. The sheer range of scholarship and sources that Rutledge brings to the table is remarkable.

In a sea of powerful metaphors both in and outside of the Bible, Rutledge cast new light and old on the crucifixion of Jesus. God really *acted*, changed history, and did something distinctive and unforgettable in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. *The Crucifixion* is undoubtedly the most important work since Moltmann's *The Crucified God* and destined become a standard work on the subject. Perfect for a "Christ and Salvation" systematic theology course, hopefully seminaries will also begin utilizing it for class. And at nearly 700 pages, it's not a short read, but it is anything but a boring one. I could not recommend *The Crucifixion* more highly to any Christian and curious person wanting to know what on earth the cross is all about.

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5   "One of the strongest arguments in favor of the apocalyptic perspective in the New Testament is that it gives the devil his due. Radical evil—ranging from macro to micro, from the massacre of millions to the torture-murderer of a child—is not denied or glossed over" (388).