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# The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

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# The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

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Edited by  
Calvin L. Smith  
Stephen M. Vantassel

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The *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

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*Please note, all material is arranged by publication date,  
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## Introduction

Calvin L. Smith

### *About*

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is an online journal. All articles and reviews are published online as PDF files, and are downloadable by subscribers.

All articles and reviews are published in real time. Once peer reviewed and typeset they are immediately published online and the subscribers notified by email. This takes the place of a printed journal. Subscribers can print-off articles and bind them in a folder for future reference. This means there is no delay between acceptance and publication of an article: the material becomes available immediately to the academic and Church communities.

What you have here are the articles, review articles, and reviews from 2018 collected together in a single edition for subscribers to print-off, or consult in electronic mode on Kindle or an e-Book reader.

In addition all past volumes of The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics are available from the website: [www.theevangelicalreview.com](http://www.theevangelicalreview.com)

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is a peer-reviewed, online, open access (from 2019) journal exploring God's revelation to humanity in the form of Jesus Christ. Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical Christian tradition are welcomed and invited from across the disciplinary spectrum: Evangelical theology, biblical studies, biblical theology, politics, society, economics, missiology, homiletics, discipleship, preaching, conversion, salvation, atonement, redemption, the Church et al.

### *About...*

*The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics* and *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*, are international peer-reviewed journals exploring Evangelical issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. The purpose of the journal is to bring an international and scholarly Evangelical analysis to bear upon various social and political issues of national and international interest. The Editors are committed to presenting the full spectrum of Evangelical thought to provide readers (whether Evangelical or those analysing Evangelical phenomena) with thoughtful, scholarly debate and original research that is biblically based and theologically sound.

### *Core Values*

*The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values

and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

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Intending authors should see our guidance notes for articles, review articles, and reviews and use and electronic submission form:

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Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics  
**Articles**







# Marxist Parallels with the Seven Mountain Mandate

**Richard Tanksley and Marlin Schaich**

**KEYWORDS:**

| Seven Mountain Mandate | New Apostolic Reformation | Althusser |  
| Societal Change | Marxist | Cultural Hegemony |

**ABSTRACT:**

The Seven Mountain Mandate (SMM), a teaching recently promoted by Christian leaders typically associated with the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), shares similarities with earlier Marxist conceptions of cultural hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. While each of the two groups directs its followers to strive for antithetical goals, the strategies of both groups to achieve societal change is uncannily similar. These commonalities include the identification of a nearly identical set of change agents that promote a radical conversion of culture. The spheres of influence that both groups target include: religion, family, education, media, government (politics and legal), business (trade unions), and media (arts and entertainment). The historical origins and emergence of these seven spheres, along with their tactical adjustments, are revealed through examples of tactics to control two societal realms, education and business, in both Marxist and Christian literature. The parallels discovered between the Christian and Marxist tactics examined imply a need for broader study of the SMM to reduce confusion and to more fully understand uniquely Christian transformation of society..

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## INTRODUCTION

The historical tensions between evangelical Christianity and Marxism are well known, so it is remarkable that many Christians who are primarily non-denominational charismatics unknowingly share a strategy with earlier Marxists philosophers on how to increase influence on society. Specifically, key elements of the Christian strategy, first dubbed the Seven Mountain Mandate (SMM) by evangelicals Dr. Bill Bright and Loren Cunningham (Pinnacle Forum, “The Seven Mountains of Culture” section), are nearly identical to the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) developed by Louis Althusser (1918-1990), on the basis of the theories of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), and others (Althusser 2014). Current-day SMM subscribers and historical Marxists like Althusser outline the key objects of societal influence to be religion, family, education, media, government, business (trade unions), and arts and entertainment. Although both Marxists and, more recently, certain groups of Christians seek to increase a particular movement’s influence and power by targeting these societal spheres, their desired social outcomes differ tremendously. Curiously, both groups have identified the exactly same arenas in which they believe they must bear influence as a formula to promote their goals. This study seeks to uncover the similarities of both approaches and raise questions about the roots of the SMM. Attention will also be particularly directed to examining parallel Marxist and SMM views within the areas of education and business. Focused inquiry into historical influences on the SMM is crucial for understanding the political, ideological, and religious impact that may eventually be achieved, especially because these strategies are creating confrontations and potential changes in both political and religious realms.

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## BACKGROUND OF THE SEVEN MOUNTAIN MANDATE

There is nothing new about Christians advocating for positive change or reflecting on causes of judgment in government and society. St. Augustine's *City of God* (c. 426) refuted the assumption that Christians had caused the fall of Rome and instead suggested that the vices and the alternative gods of Rome were to blame. In regards to constructive change, Martin Luther is heralded for "shap[ing] the German language, mentality and way of life," and this impact is still being felt today ("How Martin Luther" 2017). In the 1950s, teachings on Christian influence and dominion can be found in the work of R. J. Rushdoony (Clarkson 2016). Rushdoony's influence extended beyond his writings as he was also an activist for home-schooling, founder of a Christian think tank called the Chalcedon Foundation, and grassroots organizer (McVicar 2015, 122). Rushdoony "articulated a social project that called Christians to 'take dominion over all spheres of human society—including the state—and turn them toward explicitly Christian purposes'" (McVicar 2015, 146). Such appropriations of power by Christian leaders align well with Lasswell's definition of politics in a book of the same title, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936), in which Lasswell succinctly identifies issues related to power dynamics that have been theorized and applied since the first governmental systems were conceived.

The SMM strategy fits into this context of historical Christian desire for national or world dominion through focused activism, albeit in different forms and with different pretexts. The trope of "seven mountains" can be attributed to various sources. Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ), Loren Cunningham (Youth with a Mission: YWAM), and Francis Schaeffer (L'Abri) each independently reported God-given revelatory instructions to his people to focus on seven areas that, if transformed through the power of God and the activism of Christians, could propel the church towards a certain, future state of dominion

(Christian International; M'Kayla 2010). These seven mountains or areas to be influenced in culture included business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family, and religion (Marketplace Leaders, "There Are 7 Mountains of Influence in Culture"). According to an interview with Cunningham (2007), his revelation took place in August 1975. Cunningham also reports that Bright similarly received the revelation prior to their meeting together in Colorado later that year. Weeks later, Cunningham's wife also heard Francis Schaeffer describe the same mandates on Schaeffer's televised broadcast. Some sources leave Schaeffer out of the list of originators of the Seven Mountain Mandate (Generals International), while others report that he taught on the SMM independently of Bright and Cunningham (Christian International).

Although these leaders are attributed with promoting changes in the seven spheres in the 1970s, relatively few works that referred directly to the SMM were published until the 2000s. It appears that only later were the social areas of the SMM incorporated into words of prophetic revelation. An example of this is from the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders, in 2014, who decided to include some statements on the SMM as part of their annual prophetic statement (Jacobs, "7 Mountains Movement" section). It should be noted that there is no record to our knowledge of Francis Schaeffer ever claiming that the spheres of influence were divinely revealed. He had read books by Rushdoony and, as a philosopher, was acquainted with dominionist thought (FAMPEOPLE.com, "Influence of Rushdoony" section).

## SELECT TERMINOLOGY AND THEOLOGY LEADING TO THE SMM

A number of concepts and labels overlap and are used loosely by both SMM adherents and their critics. First, most if not all of the SMM leaders can be found within the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) movement. The term NAR was coined by C. Peter Wagner in 1994 to indicate the

inception of a new reformation involving the “restoration of the offices of prophet and apostles as found in the earliest years of Christianity” (Poloma 2016, “Timeline” section). Typically, the NAR has written about, or otherwise used SMM not only to promote its version of social and political activism, but also to promote a “victorious eschatology,...that the kingdom of God will grow and advance until it fills the earth” (Eberle and Trench, introductory section). While some NAR and SMM leaders distance themselves from earlier movements, many do have associations with a plethora of groups or events with labels such as the Latter Rain, Kingdom Now & Kansas City Prophets, Dominion Theology, Manifest Sons of God (Joel’s Army), Third Wave, and Toronto Blessing (SO4J-TV & Video Productions). These labels do not refer to identical groups, but to groups or events that were predecessors and/or adopters of the SMM. NAR leaders may have slight differences in doctrine, though most if not all teach and promote the SMM.

Within a broader context, “Dominionism is the idea that conservative Christians have the right—and the responsibility—to take dominion over all aspects of life, including the government” (Conn 2011, 10). Some researchers have developed criteria for “hard” versus “soft” dominionist labels (Clarkson 2005). Soft dominionists are considered “Christian nationalists” who use litmus tests for policy choices. They are willing to work within the framework of existing government. Hard dominionists want the U.S. to be a Christian theocracy led by Christian leaders (Berlet 2008), including some who seek to follow Old Testament Laws (Miles 2011). Presumably hard dominionists also conceive of worldwide Christian influence and dominion as well. Critics and other observers typically include SMM as dominionists (Clarkson 2016).

However, Wagner denies that NAR leaders seek to usher in a theocracy, “but rather to have kingdom-minded people in every one of the Seven Mountains” so that they can exercise their influence (2011, “A Theocracy” section). Other NAR leaders eschew the term dominionism as it implies “control and manipulation” and is too often associated with a flawed,

earlier movement (Marketplace Leaders, “Theology,” “Reclaiming” section). Disagreements over this label occur in political circles, too; for example, *Christianity Today* recently sought to distance U.S. Senator Ted Cruz from dominionism (Gagnon and Humphrey 2016). It is also worth noting the differences between earlier reconstructionists, such as Rushdoony, and the NAR leaders. Rushdoony believed that conversions taking place over centuries or even thousands of years would usher in Christian dominant society (Clarkson 2016). SMM leaders, on the other hand, suggest that a top-down approach is possible, that a Christian elite can dominate society in a matter of years. “Culture is defined by a relatively small number of change agents who operate at the tops of cultural spheres or societal mountains” (Hillman, introductory section). While the history that led up to the SMM is important, the particular focus of this paper is the subset of Protestants (primarily charismatics) who associate with NAR and who subscribe to the Seven Mountain Mandate.

## INFLUENCE OF NAR AND THE SEVEN MOUNTAIN MANDATE

Since the NAR and SMM are so closely tied together, one should note the extent of their influence. The SMM impact is attracting followers worldwide and is seeking to influence many charismatic Protestants, including those in more mainstream denominations such as the Assemblies of God. This is despite some teachings that contradict official Assembly of God doctrine (Boyd 2015). Wagner (2011) himself writes, “Most of the new churches in the Global South, even including many which belong to denominations, would comfortably fit the NAR template” (“What Is the NAR?” section). Examples of this far-reaching influence are found in many megachurches worldwide, and in smaller counterparts that often rely on the teaching resources of their larger counterparts. NAR churches use common popular worship songs by various artists and have developed a powerful media presence by virtue of such vehicles as their

own GOD-TV and Charisma Media's *Charisma Magazine* (Pivec 2013). Various NAR leaders endorsed and worked actively to secure the election of President Donald Trump, and some are on Trump's Evangelical Executive Advisory Board (Spreeman 2016). Altogether, the NAR/SMM influence can be seen in many churches and to a lesser extent in the other "mountains" of culture.

## TEACHINGS AND CRITICISM OF THE SEVEN MOUNTAIN MANDATE

Johnny Enlow has written extensively on the SMM and continues to emphasize it prophetically. In a recent excerpt of Enlow speaking for God in a way that clearly reflects part of the seven mandates, he proclaimed, "My present intervention in your government, your media and your economy is all part of the process of enabling you to be positioned for maximum reflecting of My brilliance among the nations" (Enlow 2017, "I Have Chosen Trump" section). According to Enlow (2008), the seven mountains are delineated in the Revelation of John: "Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12, AV). Enlow articulates that the seven attributes of majesty each represent a "main pillar of every nation's culture or society" (2008, 9). Enlow adds that "power speaks of Government; riches speaks of the Economy; wisdom speaks of Education; strength speaks of Family; honor speaks of Religion; glory speaks of Celebration (Arts and Entertainment); and blessing speaks of Media" (9). Enlow suggests that these altered meanings are based on his interpretations from the Greek Bible. Exegetically issues arise with Enlow's interpretations and understanding of the context of Scripture, as Enlow urges that Christians should "disciple or instruct... the nations in these seven foundations of culture so that we would in turn deliver them to Him, thus fulfilling Revelation 11:15. The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord" (9).

Other NAR leaders also build heavily on the Seven Mountain Mandate. Mike Bickle (2008) of The International House of Prayer, for instance, writes in his study notes of Revelation that “the greatest spiritual breakthroughs in history will occur, affecting our culture in the areas of business, education, government, media, and arts, etc.” (2). In addition, various prominent NAR leaders combine their thoughts in the book *Invading Babylon: The Seven Mountain Mandate* (Wallnau and Johnson 2013). According to the introduction, “each chapter offers a different perspective on relevant ways to infiltrate and influence our society with Christian values and standards” (10).

The NAR doctrine is not without its critics. Numerous books and websites have sought to reveal its error (Pivec 2013; SO4J-TV & Video Productions). These sources specifically call into question the Seven Mountain Mandate and NAR doctrine. No source to our knowledge, however, yet links the Seven Mountain Mandate to earlier Marxist teaching.

### SELECT MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE AGENTS OF CHANGE

Many political philosophers have written about ways to influence or organize various spheres of society in order to further applications of their ideologies. However, none of these ideologies is aligned with the SMM more closely than are some variants of Marxism. Karl Marx, publishing *Das Capital* in 1867, was a revolutionary who wanted to put his ideas into practice. Marx proposed a theory about an enduring class struggle and insisted that economics influenced all other behavior, including “politics, science, religion, art, etc.” (Foot 2004, “Ideas” section). In propagating this philosophy, Marx was a revolutionary. His goal was economic change through the proletariat rising up against the capitalists. Only then could a lasting transformation of cultural arenas be accomplished.

Later Marxists, however, downplayed the role of economics as an

agent of change and began to examine other variables. Particularly, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci advocated a view of cultural hegemony. His view explained how economics was relegated to a far less influential position as just one of many societal aspects to be transformed through activism. In place of a theory dominated by economics, Gramsci “tried to build a theory which recognized the autonomy, independence and importance of culture and ideology” (Stillo 1999, “Concept of Hegemony” section). “Like most revolutionaries of his time, Gramsci was very interested in discovering how a particular social group (a class) could achieve dominance over an ‘entire national society’” (Day 2004). Various forces vie for control of the state; Gramsci’s vision for society would bring about “not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity” (Day 2004, 721; Gramsci 1971, 5460). Thus, Gramsci and other revolutionaries sought to expand the targets of their influential effects to the widest breadth of society as possible (Day 2004, 722). Any group that could gain the most power would be the “hegemon,” which *Merriam-Webster.com* defines as the leadership or dominance over other social groups, or the “social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group” (“Definition” section). Gramsci once credited Lenin with the theory of hegemony, though Gramsci expanded it and thus deserves recognition as well (Day 2004, 720). Thinking deeply on class and power, Gramsci advocated for various strategies and interests through which the working class can become the hegemon (Stillo 1999). These varied interests extended beyond economics. Writing in his own historical context, Gramsci encountered resistance from forces representing Mussolini’s fascism and was jailed from 1926-1937. He accomplished most of his writing during this time in prison, which ended with his death.

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## ALTHUSSER AND IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

Another Marxist theorist, Louis Althusser, followed Gramsci's assumptions to produce a scheme that has uncannily resemblance to the SMM. Althusser published *Lénine et la Philosophie* in French in 1968, which was republished in English as *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971b). Additionally, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" was first published in 1970 in the review *La Pensée* (Althusser, xix). Althusser was the Marxist who systematically outlined the concept of a coercive and repressive state power that works in tandem with eight Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) to ensure the continuance of the capitalist system. These ISAs are essentially influences that are required to hold hegemonic power (Bollinger and Koivisto 2009, 305). Thus, social struggle revolves around change in each of the eight ideological areas. Not just the arena of economics, but instead eight different arenas become the battlefield, as an oft quoted statement from Althusser instructs: "No class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses" (Althusser 2014, 245; Bollinger and Koivisto 2009, 305). Althusser (1971a) outlined these eight specific ISAs (243), which are compared and contrasted with the elements of the SMM (see Figure 1). These ISAs are important "to understand how ideology brings off the feat of making things and people 'go all by themselves'" (Althusser 2014, 93). They are "relatively autonomous" and critical to examining how class struggles unfold (Bollinger and Koivisto 2009, 305).

## CONTRASTING ISA'S WITH THE SEVEN MOUNTAIN MANDATE

Althusser's ISAs and the elements of the more recent Seven Mountain Mandate are nearly identical. Still, there are some differences.

Elements of Althusser and SMM Compared		
Althusser's State Power and ISAs	versus	Seven Mountains of SMM
The religious ISA (the system of the different churches)	↔	Religion
The educational ISA (the system of the different public and private "schools")	↔	Education
The family ISA	↔	Family
Repressive state power (identified, but not an ISA) The legal ISA The political ISA (the political system, including the different parties)	↔	Government
The trade-union ISA	↔	Business
The communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.)	↔	Media
The cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.)	↔	Arts and Entertainment

Figure 1. Elements of Althusser's ISAs and SMM Compared

Particularly, to Althusser, the state uses coercion and therefore is outside of the ISAs. The state through repression interacts with the ISAs to insure hegemony. Thus, Althusser sees government separately, with the ISAs as the supporting cast (See Figure 1).

Meanwhile, in the SMM, the government is simply just one of the mountains. A second difference is that Althusser specifically identifies the legal and political ISAs. SMM does not separate these categories out but instead subsumes them under their category of government. Thirdly, the SMM uses the term "business," whereas Althusser identifies one ISA with the term "trade unions." This occurs since the trade unions basically supplant capitalism within Althusser's framework (Althusser 2014, 105).

Of course, the implications of the differences between Althusser's ISAs and the SMM as targeted sites for lasting social change are substantial. In general, while Marxists advocate for the social dominance of the working class by effecting social change through the catalysts of

the ISAs, the SMM leaders seek a different outcome: Christian dominion through activism in each of the seven spheres of influence. Remarking on the effective path to societal change, Althusser explicitly states that “there is no parliamentary road to socialism” (Althusser 2014, 107). SMM leaders, on the other hand, are more prone to seeing at least some of the changes being initiated by Christian executive and legislative leaders. While some SMM leaders hoped that Senator Ted Cruz would win the Republican nomination for U.S. President in 2016, many also supported Donald Trump as their candidate for change. Key to their acceptance were various prophecies, such as one by Wallnau, who prophesied that Trump would be a leader who would carry out God’s purposes in ways similar to King Cyrus’ actions, as described in Isaiah 45. Additionally, months before the election, Wallnau proclaimed that Trump would be the leader who would restore America. Trump “was a warrior against the global ‘demonic agenda,’” and was “raising the warning cry about the unraveling of America” (Gordon 2017).

In their rhetoric, the SMM leaders do emphasize the spiritual, but according to Wagner, “the chief producer of influence in the six non-Religion mountains is not spirituality but success” (Wagner 2016). Hillman, an SMM popularizer, identifies the importance of two earlier authors who theorize about cultural conflicts. First, Collins’ *The Sociology of Philosophies* (1998), a secular work, asserts that civilizations are influenced by a small number of philosophers. Secondly, Hunter’s *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991) identifies five arenas where cultural battles take place in a “Fields of Conflict” section. These five arenas do not include religion, but parallel five of the other seven “mountains.” Indeed, the subtitle of Hunter’s book, *Making Sense of the Battles over the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics in America* directly lists these five arenas. Thus, Hunter is one of the first writers in mainstream Christianity to systematically raise questions in these spheres of influence. Although there is no known association between Hunter and the SMM leaders, and in fact Hunter predicts that deep cultural division

in the U.S. will never be resolved, the SMM leaders likely borrowed some from Hunter's work. Still, Hillman acknowledges only secular, not specifically Marxist, parallels with SMM in his writings.

Even as they emphasize the spiritual dimension, SMM leaders do not portray this spiritual process as the slow reconstructionist process described by Rushdoony that may take centuries. Instead, SMM leaders typically urge that actions towards Christian dominion should be taken immediately (Wagner 2006, 35). This immediacy contrasts with the approach of Collins (1998), who suggests that the minimum amount of time for significant intellectual change is one to two generations (60). SMM leaders place a high priority on change coming through the restoration of apostles, prophets, and intercessors, and also through direct Christian influence on targeted elites who have the power to make the kinds of changes in each of the respective seven spheres. "When thousands of Apostles begin to stand up in their ministry, the church will become free to effectively disciple nations that are open to receiving the Lordship of Christ" (DeKoven 2001, xi-xii).

The importance of spirituality in the predicted, successful transformation to Christian dominion is predicated upon spiritual warfare. This means that the ultimate end is to gain ascendancy over each one of the seven mountains, as apostles work to "cast out territorial spirits that control those institutions" (Geivett and Pivec 2014, 3152). Interestingly, Gramsci himself, in thinking of founding an Italian Communist Party, "expressed admiration for early 'primitive' Christian communities that offered a model of cultural 'revolution' based on their 'creation of a novel and original system of moral, juridical, philosophical and artistic relations'" (Adamson 2013, 469). This ideal, four-fold description is similar to the "primitivism" that Laitinen (2014) attributes to SMM leader C. Peter Wagner, who was "longing for simpler and purer church" (83). Althusser's (2014) views on a social transformation suggests that "revolutions are made by the masses" (107). He also "argues that communism will require 'unprecedented forms,' intense political struggle

and take a very long time period to achieve” (Wall 2014). Altogether, both SMM leaders and Marxist philosophers desire change for different reasons, and envision powers being transferred to very different groups. The commonality, however, remains: both NAR leaders who are teaching Christian dominion through SMM dogma, and also Marxists who are advocating for communist revolution identify essentially the same societal spheres to target in order to propel desired changes forward.

## EDUCATION

Although any one of the seven “mountains” or any one of the eight ISAs could be examined more closely, we have selected education and business to provide a sample of the similarities and differences between Althusser and select SMM writers. Maiden (2011), one such SMM proponent, examines education and identifies humanism as a central problem to implementing a Christian view (139-150). He also formulates three questions that can guide evangelical Christians as they seek to influence educational systems with the goal of Christian dominion. First, do educators have a Christian worldview? Secondly, what exactly is being taught? Thirdly, what is the motivation for teaching: is it “an anti-God” perspective? (141). In addition to these important questions, Maiden offers observations concerning family responsibility in discipline and teaching (141). However, Maiden offers no specific educational policy prescriptions. Maiden simply exhorts all to believe that a renaissance is coming and will cause “new Harvards, Princetons, and Yales to spring up” (149). He asserts that either existing institutions of “higher learning” will become Godly, or new institutions will replace them (149).

Enlow (2015) gives far greater specificity in his chapter on education. He notes that next to the Christian mandate to influence religion in society, infiltrating education is likely the most important mandate (101). He identifies two problems in current educational structures. The first problem in current secular education centers on its priority to develop

the “left brain” when an optimal educational system would privilege instruction of the right brain. Enlow associates learning and aptitudes of the left brain with “verbal skills, abstract thinking, most mathematics, and inferential logic” (104), and he associates right-brain learning with being able to produce “discernment or gut feelings” and “lov[ing] patterns, metaphors, analogies and visuals” (103). The second problem that Enlow finds with current education in the U.S. is that the wall of separation between state and religion is improper. As a result, systems and structures of education are basically instilling government morality, which is diametrically opposed to Christian morality, in students (107). A Seven Mountain Mandate curriculum should replace the current one, Enlow says, not only with a different type of thinking and morality, but with a greater penchant for American history and civics (110-111). According to Enlow, a system of education leading to and reflecting Christian values would encourage the freedom of religion by including some compulsory religion classes starting in the sixth grade. Then, after basic instruction in various religions, parents would be free to choose among representatives in religion who would instruct children further (113-115). Education would also more deliberately help students find their passion in arts, entertainment and sports (112-113). To his credit, Enlow acknowledges that his educational reforms are not comprehensive, as they do not address concerns about discipline, class size, teaching quality, and school violence (130). Additionally, SMM leader Johnson includes the “mountain” of education as a target for influence. He offers a simple yet effective way to influence education: by volunteering to serve for the benefits of others, Christians can become welcome additions to the educational system (Walnau and Johnson 2013, 26).

Althusser’s (2014) views on the arena of education agree in some ways with Enlow’s (2015); both assert that education is the most important area to target for influence. Althusser notes that formerly religion was the dominant arena for influence in society, as the church exercised a central role over education from the 16th to the 18th centuries (142).

According to Althusser, during the French Revolution, attacks on the church over time resulted in the bourgeoisie instilling their hegemony in education at the expense of the church. Through targeting education and the other ISAs, the bourgeoisie gained the ability to continue the capitalist system of production, and they thus co-opted and maintained hegemony over the realm of education (143). Althusser observes that children are vulnerable: a completely “captive audience” (146). Education “pumps them full, with old methods and new, of certain kinds of ‘know-how’ (French arithmetic, natural history, science, literature) packaged in the dominant ideology” (145). After being dominated throughout school by ideology that reinforces capitalism, at some point the children are brought into production as workers. In ways that are similar to those of the SMM leaders, Althusser is critical of the state’s methods in education “since it depicts the school as a neutral environment free of dominant ideology because it is...not religious” (146). Althusser indicated plans to write a second volume to explain these theories more fully, but this volume was never written.

Other Marxists have acknowledged education as a vulnerable target for societal influence. Few, if any, share Althusser’s (2014) historical, religious contemplations as the foundation for views about the role of education in Marxist revolution, yet alternative Marxist views are forthright as to how education can be changed. Hill (2016), for instance, notes that Marxists are committed to three practical tenets:

1. Capitalism must be replaced through a revolution;
2. Marxists must embrace activism to effect change; and
3. Marxists are co-laborers with all groups against every form of discrimination, including economic rights that are achieved only through removing capitalism.

Hill continues with a “socialist manifesto” for education that contains 21 specific points for change. These points include removing private, faith-based and charter schools, but expanding the realm of public, state education to include free lunches, free college and adult education, and

“an honest sex education curriculum that teaches children not just ‘when to say no,’ but also when to say ‘yes.’”

To be fair, this selection of contemporary Marxist thought demonstrates how the Marxists’ goals for revolutionary changes in the sphere of education differ from SMM leaders’ goals. The intended outcomes of modern Marxists like Hill (2016) can certainly be contrasted to SMM ideals about Christian education. Further, modern Marxists seem to be more organized and prepared, having specific goals, whereas the strategic plans of SMM leaders appear to lack details. A critical point is that extensive or revolutionary educational reform requires the acquiescence of perhaps a majority of teachers, whether they are influenced by Marxism or by Christian-based SMM thinking. No cadre exists of either radical Marxists or Christian teachers at any level who would subject themselves to wholesale changes towards Marxist-based or SMM-influenced pedagogies. Furthermore, local school boards and states have an enormous amount of autonomy, so radical changes are difficult though both Marxists and SMM leaders have shown some progress toward their goals in local school battlefields.

## BUSINESS

NAR leaders identify business as one of the Seven Mountains. Because Marxists desire profits to go to workers and not to the owners of production, this presents a significant difference in their approach. Althusser (2014) specifically omits business owners and instead uses trade unions as his ISA. NAR writers who are sympathetic or enthusiastic about the SMM, on the other hand, identify the sphere of influence, or “mountain,” as “business.” Their conception of “business,” however, ranges from the general economy to specific “workplace apostles,” or wealthy Christians who have the unique ability to gain access to money and other powerful influences to change government (Geivett and Pivec 2014, 3113). Wagner

(2006) describes this as a new paradigm where “extended church apostles” assume roles in the workplace (52). He diagrams their role (8; see Figure 2).

According to this paradigm, extended church apostles and, to an extent, all Christian believers will gain the resources needed to make change. Another NAR writer, Ponder, even more directly addresses the ministry of business owners. On the website advertising his book *Cracking the Apostolic & Prophetic Code*<sup>TM</sup> (2008), he admonishes business leaders:

It is NOW TIME for you to rise up, be confirmed and ordained and SET IN YOUR PLACE as Apostles and Prophets in the marketplace and be recognized and honored as an EQUAL and on the same level as every other four-walled church leader, pastor or those who minister behind the pulpit so that the Transfer of Wealth can begin to take place in the Kingdom of God [emphasis in the original].

Others, like Walnau (2016), see business change in more general terms as they advocate for traditional conservative values in the economy, such as deregulation, a balanced budget, and lower corporate tax rates. Such policy transformations will implicitly help empower politically conservative Christian business leaders to gain power and influence in society. NAR leaders typically advocate prosperity for believers, warn against greed, and expect a shaking or new outpouring from heaven toward believers to finance the Seven Mountain Mandate agenda (Maiden 2011, 92-99).

It is doubtful that NAR “workplace apostles” would redistribute all their wealth, so as NAR leaders are compared with their Marxist counterparts, the opposing stances on equality issues are strikingly apparent. SMM teaching envisions society ruled by a new Christian elite while maintaining capitalism. Marxists, on the other hand, typically emphasize some sort of central planning and ownership either by the people or the state. Marxists such as Gramsci favored workers’ cooperatives, where the workers would own the business and earn all the profits (Jossa 2009, 3-4). Through trade unions, control over the companies would lie in the hands of workers (Gramsci 1920). Althusser

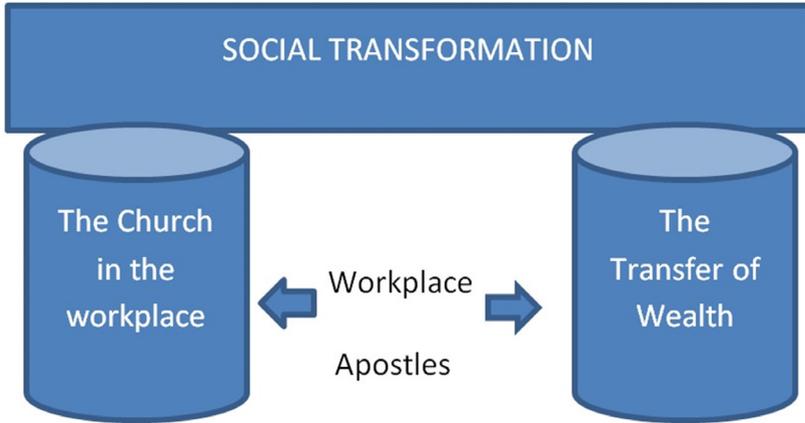


Figure 2. Social Transformation by Workplace Apostles (Wagner 2006, 8)

(2014) follows earlier Marxists and sees state-run capitalists as repressive and alienating. More specifically, the capitalist system is held together by the machinations of state dominance, “the repressive state apparatus on one hand and the ideological state apparatuses on the other” (140). Within individual ISA arenas like business or education, class struggles in such a milieu ensue, and the working class can overthrow the dominant class (153). In the business realm, workers’ unions take up the class struggle (157). However, unlike some previous Marxists, Althusser expands the potential impact to the extent that the class struggles occur in all the other ISAs as well (157). Additionally, ideology to Althusser includes some devotion to a belief such as “God, duty, or justice” (259). Failing to follow prescribed paths that violate beliefs is deemed “wicked” (260). One can extrapolate from this the conclusion that not only does capitalism need to be overturned and the current economic system replaced, but the ideology associated with capitalism must also be shamed.

Altogether, the challenges in transforming the workplace and the entire economic system seem more problematic for Marxists than the

challenges to SMM advocates because, for Marxists, a complete overhaul of the capitalist system and its associated ideology is required. SMM leaders, on the contrary, teach that transforming “business” simply means that wealth must be transferred, while the capitalist system remains in place. Even if the increased flow of wealth to Christians as the result of innovative ideas and entrepreneurial skills is insufficient, just a few key converts from among the uber-rich could theoretically tip the scale towards SMM transformation of business as SMM leaders describe this. Of course, the SMM way of thinking is far different from that of earlier church leaders like Martin Luther, who suggested that “In determining how much profit you ought to take on your business and your labor, there is no better way to reckon it than by computing the amount of time and labor you have put into it, and comparing that with the effort of a day laborer who works at some other occupation and seeing how much he earns in a day” (1962, 251). Christian-based ideology has historically changed its assumptions about business.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccles. 1:9, AV). The commonalities between the hegemony-based, Marxist thought of Gramsci and Althusser and categories of influence, or “mountains,” that are embedded in the SMM are uncanny. Both groups present pathways to change or even revolutionize society in ways that correspond with their respective ideologies. Many have critiqued Marxist thought and Marxist paths toward societal change; the comparison presented here has focused on some of the specific ideas of Gramsci and Althusser. In the specific area of education, Althusser can be seen holding views that are similar to those of the SMM leaders on the failure of secular education. Both groups require drastic changes in how education

is carried out. While the SMM can stand alone as a strategy, it is best understood if examined broadly. Though this study has placed SMM in the context of earlier Marxist thought, SMM should also be examined in the context of other Christian and non-Marxist ideas on the topic of power and influence.

Likewise, in education, it is important to understand the goals of modern Marxists such as Hill (2016) and how antithetical they are to most Christian values and specific goals for education. When SMM leaders strategize the Christian transformation of business, they assume that capitalism continues unabated, while Marxists like Gramsci do not. One need not endorse socialism, worker's councils, or a state-controlled economy to acknowledge that alternative economic systems do exist and may be empowered by the same cultural channels as the SMM. Other characteristics and nuances of Marxist thought should be studied by all who propose Christian transformation of society, whether they use SMM or some other framework.

Although claims about divine revelation accompany early descriptions of the inception of SMM as a strategic plan for Christ's church achieving dominion across America and around the world, varied and sometimes very specific theological pronouncements need to be more fully examined. Questions concerning whether SMM teachings are truly original or divinely inspired are important but outside the scope of this study. It is possible that SMM revelations are divine and that leaders such as Cunningham, Bright, and Wallnau received them independently or expounded on what had earlier been revealed.

The goal of expanding Christian influence is worthy and estimable. Whereas Collins' work in sociology rests primarily on the wisdom of secular philosophy, the SMM relies on the edifying and authoritative pronouncements of leaders in varied Christian denominations, alliances, and churches. This seems remarkable especially since the Scriptures have been searched for centuries without an explicit discovery of the potential power of seven "mountains" of influence. Variations in eschatological or

theological viewpoints aside, the promotion of Christian activism in any or all of these seven spheres of culture could be warranted. Serious logistical questions for effecting such wholesale changes, however, remain, despite variations in SMM ideologies. Millions of artists, cultural icons, bureaucrats, educators, and businessmen embrace the current system and would resist changes, perhaps especially the kind of changes that would accompany a major shift to Christian principles in the U.S. In the absence of a national crisis or truly divine intervention, transformational changes in national direction face nearly insurmountable obstacles.

Marxists fully recognize the force of this hegemony, partly through their struggles and failures to effect a lasting change in a socio-political system historically. Christians can be hopeful about wholesale changes, but many believe that Christianity has been on the decline in America for a number of years, and recent data results confirm this trend (Dinges 2015, 189). This decline may not be inexorable, however, and the inroads that the SMM leaders have made are noteworthy. Still, one must contemplate what may happen if SMM followers become too impatient. It would seem doubtful that the movement could persist for decades if the strategies of the SMM leaders yield little or no lasting changes. Disquieting, too, are the ways in which some SMM leaders criticize Christian believers who reject their mandates or the eschatological underpinnings of their teachings. This is particularly true of dispensationalists including some charismatics who pioneered some of the teachings that SMM and NAR leaders accept. Rather than ostracize those with alternative beliefs, greater unity among Christians is preferred. One such example of a SMM writer is Lake (2016): “And some have given in to a spirit of resignation or hopelessness, believing we can’t make a difference, and that, in order for Christ to come back, things have to get much worse anyway. But if we’re just hanging on till the rapture, we’ve missed our call to occupy.”

A more ecumenical approach to activism is warranted, along with greater specificity on how influence can be accomplished. That the Seven Mountain Mandate shares Marxist roots does not invalidate it.

Competition for influence in society is a normal and necessary part of life in our world, and can be healthy. There are times when hegemony falls. Historically, people of faith have succeeded in shepherding changes. In many areas of society, Christians and their cause, morality, and values have been subdued, and a more aggressive stance may be justified. Regardless of one's views on the original revelations and subsequent prophecies surrounding various parts of the seven mandates, this line of research is worthwhile and should be expanded to include earlier Christian and secular writings that examine the methods, paths and spheres of influence.

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# The Battle for Inerrancy: How the Doctrine of Inerrancy is Affecting Christian Relationships and Missions

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**KEYWORDS:**

| Inerrancy and Mission | Doctrine of Inerrancy | Reformed Christians |  
| Infallibility | Evangelical Theological Society | Southern Baptist |

**ABSTRACT:**

Christians have often turned to the Bible to justify their battle, whether physical, as is the case with the Crusades; theological, as with the Ecumenical Councils; or ecclesiastical, as in the Reformation period. Today one such battle that has come to the forefront for the North American Reformed Conservative Evangelicals (RCEs) is doctrinal. As in the case of previous battles, this doctrinal fight is deeply rooted in the way the Scripture is being perceived and interpreted. This paper identifies what may be the most significant doctrinal battleground for the RCEs, and explores the rationale that promulgates the conflict. This essay argues that one's perspective on the Bible affects the way mission is undertaken. More specifically, one's view and interpretation of the Bible will determine which doctrinal battles are worth fighting for and why, how such battle affects the posture of relationship to others and how it affects the way mission is conceived and executed..

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## INTRODUCTION <sup>1</sup>

Christians have often turned to the Bible to justify their battle, whether physical, as is the case with the Crusades; theological, as with the Ecumenical Councils; or ecclesiastical, as in the Reformation period. Today one such battle that has come to the forefront for the North American Reformed Conservative Evangelicals (henceforth RCEs or Reformed) is doctrinal. As in the case of previous battles, this doctrinal fight is deeply rooted in the way the Scripture is being perceived and interpreted. This paper identifies what may be the most significant doctrinal battleground for the RCEs, and explores the rationale that promulgates the conflict. This essay argues that our perspective on the Bible affects the way we do missions. More precisely, *one's view and interpretation of the Bible will determine which doctrinal battles are worth fighting for and why, how such battle affects the posture of relationship to others and how it affects the way mission is conceived and executed.* This paper will proceed in two steps. First, it identifies inerrancy as the one doctrine that resurfaces persistently in the battle for the Bible and explores the theological reason behind it. Second, it investigates how a commitment to the doctrine stirs the posture of interdenominational relationships and also affects the way mission is conceived and carried out. The scope of this paper is limited to the Reformed Conservative Evangelicals within North America.

### INERRANCY: A HILL ON WHICH TO DIE

Texas Judge, Paul Pressler, in his book, *A Hill on Which to Die*, argued that inerrancy was the heart of the problem in the controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and it was worth dying on that hill.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Joy Schadler for proofreading this manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 150–160.

He triumphantly concludes, “The SBC controversy was a hill on which to die. Many did die—if not physically, in other ways. It was a hill that had to be won, and won it was.”<sup>3</sup> The battle was won, at least within some circles, but not the war as the recent Licona controversy (which we will revisit)<sup>4</sup> points out. Yet more Presslers have risen to take the mantle. In fact, inerrancy has always had proponents and non-proponents in all denominations or non-denomination churches.

### *The Battle for the Bible*

On the one hand, people like Harold Lindsell, John F. McArthur, and Normal Geisler,<sup>5</sup> among others, are strongly convinced that inerrancy is a core doctrine of Evangelicalism, or that Evangelicalism stands and falls on the doctrine of inerrancy. Harold Lindsell claims that the greatest battle for evangelical Christianity was the battle for biblical inerrancy.<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur argues that one cannot “hope to be an effective student of the Word of God or to even lead an effective Christian life” if s/he denies the doctrine of inerrancy.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, people like Robert Gundry, Peter Enns, and A.T.B. McGowan, among others, believe that inerrancy as understood and defined by the former group is unnecessary, a modern invention. McGowan argues that inerrancy dies ‘the death of thousand

3 Ibid., 306.

4 Mike (Michael) Licona is a New Testament scholar from the Southern Baptist Convention. His excellent, yet controversial book, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), revived the old controversy of inerrancy resulting in people like R. Albert Mohler, Norman Geisler, F. David Farnell and others questioning his commitment to the doctrine.

5 Geisler is the chief proponent of the cause of inerrancy. He was instrumental in ousting Robert Gundry from ETS membership in 1982 because of the latter’s position on the doctrine. Geisler has also labeled the attempt to dialogue on the topic of biblical inerrancy in the ‘Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy’ as “Madness in the Method.” Norman L Geisler, “A Review of Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 65.

6 Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 200.

7 John MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2015), 23.

qualifications.”<sup>8</sup> He vies, “I am arguing for a high view of Scripture, based on a verbal spiration [not inspiration] of the text but . . . reject the implication that thereby the *autograph* must be inerrant.”<sup>9</sup> Enns contends, “On a deeper level and ultimately more important level, inerrancy sells God short.”<sup>10</sup> By selling out, Enns means that inerrancy creates more problems than solution creating conflicts and misunderstanding. Thus, the doctrine becomes the source of the problem, not the solution. In between, within a broad spectrum, are Clark H. Pinnock, Michael Licona, Ben Witherington III, and Michael Bird, among others. While sympathetic to the idea, they prefer to modify, avoid the term, or disassociate from the traditionalist understanding of inerrancy. This last group can be classified as the limited inerrantist and Geisler and others as unlimited inerrantist, at least for the purpose of this paper.<sup>11</sup> The limited inerrantists do not think either a precise understanding or a clear-cut definition of the term is a necessary factor for Evangelicalism. Mike Licona, while not denying the doctrine of inerrancy argues that “the truth of the Christian gospel does not hang on every word in the Bible being correct, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is, at the very most, a secondary doctrine.”<sup>12</sup> Michael Bird chimes in that even though inerrancy possesses a certain utility in the “battle for the Bible” in the North American context, it is not an essential facet of faith for global Evangelicalism as the majority of world Christians have always upheld the inspiration, authority, and high view of the Bible even in the absence of such nomenclature.<sup>13</sup> However, a strong commitment to the doctrine has found its abode, particularly among

8 A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007), 106. McGowan in referencing the ‘death of thousand qualifications’ was quoting I. Howard Marshall.

9 *Ibid.*, 124.

10 Peter Enns, “Inerrancy, However, Defined, does not Describe what the Bible Does,” in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), 84.

11 This paper uses ‘inerrantist and inerrancy’ to refer to the unlimited inerrantists and their view unless noted otherwise.

12 “On Chicago’s Muddy Waters,” *Risen Jesus, Inc.*, June 2, 2014, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://www>

13 Michael F. Bird, “Inerrancy is Not Necessary for Evangelicalism Outside the USA,” in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, 145–146.

many RCEs.

Whatever one's position may be, attributing the doctrine of inerrancy to the modern fundamentalist making as Ernest R. Sandeen theorized,<sup>14</sup> or to the early nineteenth century Princeton theologians'—in particular Benjamin B. Warfield—misunderstanding of the position of the Reformers like Calvin and Luther as proposed by Jack Bartlett Rogers and Donald K. McKim,<sup>15</sup> or to the rationalist creation that emerged from “the heat of the battle [in the early nineteenth century]” as A. T. B. McGowan argued<sup>16</sup> fails to consider the complexity of the issue properly. Ronald F. Satta had argued against Sandeen's thesis by showing that Charles Hodge, father of A. A. Hodge, had published an article defending the exact concept of inerrancy twenty-five years before his son wrote about it.<sup>17</sup> He also asserts “The Early Church's adherence to the mechanical dictation theory of transmission expressed its commitment to verbal inspiration and inerrancy.”<sup>18</sup> John D. Woodbridge<sup>19</sup> and recently Jonathan Moorhead,<sup>20</sup> have also countered the thesis of Rogers and McKim by showing that even though the exact term inerrancy was not used, there always were Christians who, beginning from

14 Sandeen is believed to have set the trajectory for the idea that A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield construed the concept of inerrancy to safeguard their conviction in reaction to the then rising attack of biblical criticism. Ernest Robert Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 126–128. This theory then has been bought and reproduced by the influential historian such as Marsden in his George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, vol. 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

15 Rogers and McKim. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 458–459.

16 McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture*, 114, 121. Mark Noll also sympathizes with Rogers and McKim's position. *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1987), 13. Recently, Ronald Hendel has suggested that inerrancy came about from “The Dream of the Perfect Text” as a response to the challenge posed by the modern critical approach. Ronald Hendel, “The Dream of a Perfect Text: Textual Criticism and Biblical Inerrancy in Early Modern Europe,” *Supplements to the journal for the study of Judaism* 175, no. 1 (2017): 517, 539.

17 R. F. Satta, “Fundamentalism and Inerrancy: A Response to the Sandeen Challenge,” *Evangelical Journal* 21, no. 2 (2003): 73.

18 *Ibid.*, 74.

19 John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1982), 31–32.

20 Jonathan Moorhead, “Inerrancy and Church History: Is Inerrancy a Modern Invention?,” *The Master's Seminary Journal* 27, no. 1 (2016): 75.

the early church Fathers, have subscribed to the idea of inerrancy. But the more pressing challenge to Rogers and McKim's thesis comes from John D. Woodbridge, who has taken a systematic and critical look at their presentation of Luther and Calvin (and others) and found it to be less than convincing.<sup>21</sup> Helm, a British philosopher, has challenged the claim that inerrancy came about merely as a result of employing rationalistic logic. Such simplistic claim, Helm argues, is built on the failure to differentiate between using reason in a proper way and being rationalistic.<sup>22</sup> Helm's rebuttal is interesting in that he believes Warfield never intended the doctrine of inerrancy to be the center stage of his theology—D. G. Hart, the notable American historian, also argued similarly about J. Gresham Machen.<sup>23</sup> Attributing this position to Warfield's theological articulation, he contends, is anachronistic, one that fundamentalists and evangelicals employ. Nevertheless, Helm concludes, attributing Warfield's articulation of inerrant Bible to that of rationalism as done by McGowan and others lacks clear evidence and cogent argument and appears to be done more from caricature.<sup>24</sup> Therefore *ad hominem* attacks on the inerrantist are found to be wanting.

If the doctrine of inerrancy is not a fundamentalist making, or a rationalistic invention, or an idea birthed in the heat of the battle, what prompts the inerrantists to be so passionately committed to the doctrine? The answer is both logical/philosophical and biblical/theological. Logically/philosophically, inerrancy for RCEs is tied to the character of God,<sup>25</sup> who cannot lie (Heb 6:18; Titus 1:2). Positively, an infallible God breathes an infallible Word.<sup>26</sup> God, being free from any error,

21 Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 67.

22 Paul Helm, "B. B. Warfield's Path to Inerrancy: An Attempt to Correct Some Serious Misunderstandings," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 72, no. 1 (2010): 27–31.

23 D. G. Hart, "Fundamentalism, Inerrancy, and the Biblical Scholarship of J. Gresham Machen," *The Journal of Presbyterian History* (1997-), no. 1 (1997): 13–28.

24 Helm, "B. B. Warfield's Path to Inerrancy," 42.

25 "What Is Biblical Inerrancy?," *Defending Inerrancy*, n.d., accessed October 6, 2017, <http://defendinginerrancy.com/why-is-inerrancy-important/>.

26 Article XI "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>.

transmitted an errorless message and preserved its veracity from the limitation of human culture, language, and sinfulness.<sup>27</sup> Negatively, if God cannot be trusted to give an inerrant message, he cannot be trusted in other areas as well. Affirming an errant Bible drives Christians back, Woodbridge argues, to the neo-orthodoxy dilemma of distinguishing the infallible “central saving message” from the errant difficult surrounding material.”<sup>28</sup> To them, inerrancy is the fundamental of all other Christian doctrines, because the rest have no divine authority apart from the inerrancy of Scripture.<sup>29</sup> Biblically/theologically, inerrancy is taught in the Bible (John 10:35; Matt. 5:18) and affirmed throughout the church history.<sup>30</sup> If every Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16-17), then Scripture must be infallible (1 Pet 1:23-25), incapable of failing, and therefore, is permanently binding. An *inspired* Scripture is *infallible*, and an inspired and infallible Scripture is *inerrant* (John 3:12; 17:7).<sup>31</sup> Proponents believe that the three are intricately related that when one crumples the other two follow. They may be distinguished but not separated. The crucial issue here is not the word, per se, but also the ideas it represents and its interrelatedness to other doctrines beginning from that of God.

A strong commitment to the idea that not just the narrative but also every single word in the Bible is inspired differentiates the unlimited inerrantist from the limited inerrantist—those who believe that the perfect accuracy of the word and text is not necessary—such as Pinnock.<sup>32</sup> The ongoing petition for inerrancy by the unlimited inerrantists, which to this present moment of writing has 67,004 signatories, states “I affirm that the Bible alone, and in its entirety, is the infallible written Word of God in original

27 Article IV “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” accessed October 6, 2017, <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>.

28 Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, 154.

29 “What Is Biblical Inerrancy?”

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Clark H. Pinnock and Barry L. Callen, *The Scripture Principle: Reclaiming the Full Authority of the Bible* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2009), 262.

text and is, therefore, *inerrant in all it affirms or denies on whatever topic it address* [emphasis added].<sup>33</sup> The unapologetic commitment to the doctrine and desire to enforce the same sets them apart. Mohler argues, “It is not enough to affirm biblical inerrancy in general terms. The integrity of this affirmation depends upon the affirmation of inerrancy in every detailed sense,” because the Devil is in the details.<sup>34</sup> The limited inerrantist, on the other hand, allows for minor errors in non-redemptive matters.<sup>35</sup> For them, the doctrine as understood by the former and to uphold the precise term is to die the death of a thousand qualifications since we neither have direct access to the autograph nor can know precisely what was in them.<sup>36</sup> RCEs, however, are convinced that a misuse of the term should not be a reason to abandon the name because every word or theological term is being misused by some. They believe that if Christians cannot affirm the truthfulness of all the small details of the Bible, and thus affirm inerrancy, they cannot trust the heavenly things.<sup>37</sup> They recognize that affirmation of the inerrant Bible does not necessarily guarantee inerrant interpretation, but as Millard J. Erickson argues, retaining the term is important because of the role of one’s assumption and pre-exegetical presuppositions in theology—the question is not whether the interpreter has pre-exegetical presupposition but whether s/he scrutinizes them.<sup>38</sup> Even though the meaning of the text is not *determined* by the assumption one brings, it is

33 “The Bible Petition,” accessed January 5, 2018, <http://defendinginerrancy.com/sign-the-petition/>

34 R. Albert Mohler, “The Devil Is in the Details: Biblical Inerrancy and the Licona Controversy,” *AlbertMohler.com*, last modified September 14, 2011, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/09/14/the-devil-is-in-the-details-biblical-inerrancy-and-the-licona-controversy/>.

35 Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* / Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2011), 13.

36 Ben III Witherington, “The Truth Will Out: An Historian’s Perspective on the Inerrancy Controversy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 1 (March 2014): 20, 25.

37 John M Frame, “Inerrancy: A Place to Live,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57, no. 1 (March 2014): 30.

38 *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy*, 1987, 232.

affected;<sup>39</sup> therefore, it is vital not only to retain the term but also to fight for its cause.

### *The 'Bible' that Creates the Battle*

The Reform Conservative Evangelicals' unapologetic commitment to the doctrine of inerrancy also leads them to see others who disagree with their view as deviating from the historic faith. This mindset, in turn, justifies their battle against the 'dissenters' as biblical. So, their inerrant view of the Bible becomes responsible for creating further battles. This posture is evident both in their rhetoric and action. The debate over the issue of inerrancy between Ben Witherington III and Don Carson (and John Frame), during the plenary discussion of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in 2013 illustrates this point. While Witherington deemed it impossible, if not unnecessary, to have a precise definition of the term, Carson disagreed. The latter believed that Witherington's unwillingness, if not apathy, to define the term precisely blurs the line with those who submit to the authority of the Scripture and those who are, according to Carson, "beginning to slip to the other side."<sup>40</sup> At the roundtable conversation with Licona on the subject of his controversial book, Daniel L. Akin, the president of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminar, NC, emphasized that even though he would consider inviting Licona—Licona was the Director of Apologetics for North American Mission Board of the SBC and professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary, NC, (which Normal Geisler founded) until his 'resignation' from both the positions in 2011 after his 2010 controversial book—to speak on campus, he would 'unequivocally answer no' [his precise words are "The unequivocal answer is *no*, I would not] to inviting him to join his faculty, unless his (Licona's) understanding was revised.<sup>41</sup> Akin declares,

39 Ibid.

40 D. A. Carson and Ben Witherington III, "Plenary Discussion on Biblical Inerrancy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Mar 2014 (March 1, 2014): 41–42.

41 Daniel L Akin et al., "A Roundtable Discussion with Michael Licona on The Resurrection of Jesus a New Historiographical Approach," *Southeastern Theological*

“There is too much at stake when it comes to “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).”<sup>42</sup> Licona’s words corroborate the seriousness of Akin’s declaration: “In addition [to wrongly propagate that I was fired], calls were made behind the scenes to prevent me from earning an income elsewhere. Some SBC professors were harassed for taking the position that interpreting Matthew’s raised saints in a non-historical manner is compatible with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Others were uninvited from established speaking engagements to being dismissed from their teaching position.”<sup>43</sup> What the ETS failed to do to Pinnock,<sup>44</sup> the SBC was, to a certain measure, able to do to Licona. Pressler’s words that “Many did die—if not physically, in other ways,” seemed to be true indeed. The RCEs’ deep respect for the inspired text has fostered a view of Scripture that is inerrant, one that they are willing to die for, and at the same time prepared for others to die along with them.

However, defining the Reformed stance on Bible, others, and mission in terms of its retaliatory spirit misconstrues their position. RCEs are firmly committed both to the Bible and to Christian unity. While on the one hand, they have alienated others on the basis of the doctrine of inerrancy, on the other they have united on the same doctrine.

## INERRANCY: A PLACE TO LIVE

“Inerrancy: A Place to Live” was the title of John M. Frame’s presentation on the 2013 Evangelical Theological Society annual conference. In it, he argues that even though inerrancy is a biblical doctrine, a propositional truth, it is more than simply a test of orthodoxy; “[inerrancy] is a place to

*Review* 3, no. 1 (2012): 97.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 91.

44 The ETS in 2002 voted to challenge the membership of Pinnock because of his position on inerrancy. But the vote fell short of a needed majority (two third) even though the vote garnered 63%.

stand, a way to live.”<sup>45</sup> In his speech, Frame exhorts that Christians (those who believe in inerrancy) should be willing and ready to learn from liberals but always be aloof to their presuppositions and worldviews, because even though they share an outward resemblance “They are not just wrong about this or that. They are holding and articulating a worldview that is impossible for us to countenance [here Frame seems to be primarily referring to the liberals while also not ignoring the unlimited errantists] for even a moment. From our point of view, they are far out in left field; from their point of view, we are far out in right field.”<sup>46</sup> In Frame’s framework, there is no room for compromise, no place to live together between those who deny inerrancy and those who affirm the doctrine when it comes to the matter of faith.

### *The Particularized Haven: A Reformed Asylum*

John Frame, in his speech, was merely echoing the sentiment of the Evangelical Theological Society and many of its members. Inerrancy was one of the central doctrines on which ETS is founded. Its constitution article III reads, “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.”<sup>47</sup> Its commitment to the doctrine has led to questioning Robert H. Gundry’s position in 1983, and eventually to his resignation from ETS, and to the rigorous examination of Clark H. Pinnock and John Sander’s views on the matter in 2002.<sup>48</sup> ETS, in its endeavor to oust dissenters, were following the footsteps of their predecessors who hedged a boundary within the doctrine of inerrancy in 1978. In 1977, some scholars gathered to clarify and defend the doctrine of inerrancy and founded the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI).<sup>49</sup> In Chicago, the following year

45 Frame, “Inerrancy,” 29.

46 Ibid., 34.

47 “ETS Constitution | The Evangelical Theological Society.”

48 Doug Koop, “Closing the Door on Open Theists?,” *ChristianityToday.com*, accessed October 8, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/january/14.24.html>.

49 “International Council on Biblical Inerrancy,” accessed October 8, 2017, <http://>

about 300 scholars in the conference drafted what is called Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI). Even though ETS adopted the idea of inerrancy formulated by the ICBI, belief in the ICBI statement did not become a condition for membership in the ETS.<sup>50</sup> However, within ETS there was and is an active push to interpret inerrancy in the light of the CSBI and to make others conform to the standard.

The struggle to make a safer place for inerrancy transcends a particular denomination or Christian society. In 1973, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) separated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States (southern) “in opposition to the long-developing theological liberalism which denied the deity of Jesus Christ and the inerrancy and authority of Scripture.”<sup>51</sup> The Orthodox Presbyterian church founded in 1936 under the leadership of Graham J. Machen,<sup>52</sup> due in part, to the doctrine of inerrancy,<sup>53</sup> was again divided in 2006.

Inerrancy, however, has found a more peaceful place within many Reformed circles. The Southern Baptists came out victorious in the battle for inerrancy during the 80s. Gregory A. Wills, a prominent Southern Baptist historian, who is now the Dean of the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, referred to the hiring of David S. Dockery in the 80s as the sign of ‘The Conservative Takeover’ of the school.<sup>54</sup> Wills calls Dockery, “a bona fide conservative, a convinced

[library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI.shtml](http://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI.shtml).

50 Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 37.

51 “History – Presbyterian Church in America,” accessed October 8, 2017, <https://www.pcanet.org/history/>.

52 “Orthodox Presbyterian Church,” accessed October 8, 2017, <https://www.opc.org/historian.html>.

53 Even though there were other forces at play that eventually resulted in Machen’s separation from the mainline Presbyterian Church, the battle for right doctrine tied to inerrancy was chief among them. Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, & Moderates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25, 219, 229.

54 Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 478–481.

inerrantist”<sup>55</sup> who contributed to “building a conservative faculty.”<sup>56</sup> Today, the doctrine of inerrancy is celebrated in many circles within the Southern Baptist Convention. Even though Charles Hodge, Warfield, and Machen were able to hold the ground of inerrancy only partially within Presbyterian churches, they did take captive several frontlines. The president of Reformed Theological Seminary (Presbyterian), Ligon Duncan, joined hands with R. Albert Mohler, the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, C. J. Mahaney, the founder of Sovereign Grace Church, and Mark Dever, the founder of 9Marks Ministries to form the Together for the Gospel (T4G) biennial conference, whose confession article reads thus: “We affirm that the sole authority for the Church is the Bible, verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, and totally sufficient and trustworthy.”<sup>57</sup> The 2016 conference had 10,000 participants from 52 countries<sup>58</sup> and more are expected to participate in the 2018 conference to be held in Louisville, Kentucky. A closely associated yet different organization, The Gospel Coalition (TGC), also manifest a strong bent towards upholding the inerrantist view although the words ‘verbally inspired Word of God’ and ‘without error’ are used in the place of inerrancy in their confessional statement.<sup>59</sup> Prominent figures, such as Tim Keller (Presbyterian Church PCA), Alistair Begg (pastor of Parkside Church, a nondenominational church), David Dockery (a Southern Baptist who is currently the president of Trinity International University), and John Piper (part of Converge, formerly Baptist General Conference) are some of its council members. TGC Preamble to the Confessional Statement reads, “We are fellowship of evangelical churches in the Reformed tradition deeply committed to the renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and

55 Ibid., 479.

56 Ibid., 508.

57 “Affirmations & Denials,” *Together for the Gospel*, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://t4g.org/about/affirmations-and-denials/>.

58 This number is the official report received through email from a T4G official representative.

59 TGC, “Confessional Statement,” article 2, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/>

to reforming our ministry to conform fully to the Scripture.”<sup>60</sup> In these camps, the inspired inerrant Word of God functions as both the propelling and controlling features of mission. Inerrancy is at peace!

Reformed conservative evangelicals, with their strong commitment to biblical inerrancy, find the denial of the doctrine a rejection of the truthfulness of the Bible. Therefore, finding a safe asylum to preserve the purity of the gospel becomes not only essential but also a task that a true Christian must undertake, so they contend. But this sacred space is not to be found in the broader Christian coalition such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) or other ecumenical partnerships, because “[They] are convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been misrepresented, misunderstood, and marginalized in many Churches and among many who claim the name of Christ. Compromise of the Gospel has led to the preaching of false gospels, the seduction of many minds and movements, and the weakening of the Church’s Gospel witness.”<sup>61</sup> Where inerrancy is denied is not a place they can live with; they needed to find a safer haven.

Inerrancy, however, is not a doctrinal island; inerrancy is interconnected to one’s view of inspiration, hermeneutics, and exegesis, the last of which we will discuss below.

### ***The Prioritized Gospel: An Exegetical Product***

Is there a correlation between hermeneutics/exegesis<sup>62</sup> and inerrancy? Does affirming or denying inerrancy affect the way one interprets the text? If the question is whether it is legitimate for there to be a connection, the answer can be contested.<sup>63</sup> However, if the question is whether those

60 TGC, “Preamble,” accessed January 5, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/>

61 T4G, “Affirmations and Denials,” accessed January 5, 2018, <http://t4g.org/about/affirmations-and-denials/>

62 I am using the term exegesis and hermeneutics interchangeably, stripping off all the intricacies involved in the term, merely to refer to the way we interpret the Bible.

63 Moises Silva has argued that tying inerrancy to specific hermeneutical boundary lines is a meaningless pursuit, a medicine that can be worse than the disease. Harvie M. Conn, *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

who affirm inerrancy are prone to interpret the text in a particular way as opposed to those who deny the doctrine, the answer is yes. For instance, two scholars who have different opinions on inerrancy may come up with same interpretation of a particular text. In this case, one's view on inerrancy does not infringe on one's interpretation. However, in the case of seeming discrepancies between texts the inerrantist is more likely to default to resolve rather than accept the contradictions, whereas those not committed to textual inerrancy may not necessarily be bothered by it.<sup>64</sup> Or in the case of complicated passages, the errantist is likely to embrace explanations different from the inerrantist.<sup>65</sup> There is, therefore, a correlation between inerrancy and exegesis, at least among some.

How then does the correlation between inerrancy and exegesis work out concerning mission among the Reformed circle? Even though there has not been a rigorous study in this area (at least that I am familiar with), there is a general tendency for the inerrantists, first, to consciously justify their methodology based on their commitment to the doctrine; second, to subconsciously be guided by the idea of inerrancy in their reading of the text. The example of the latter case may be what Silva observed among many conservative Christians: "For many believers, unfortunately, assurance that the Bible is truth appears to be inseparable from assurance about the traditional interpretive positions, so that if we question the latter, we seem to be doubting the former."<sup>66</sup> The word inerrancy has become so entrenched among some Christians that a denial of the word is considered a rejection of the concept. The examples for the former case are the two works of Millard J. Erickson and J. I. Packer under the

Baker Book House, 1988), 79.

64 Ibid., 32.

65 One example would be the explanation of Joshua 6, the story of the fall of Jericho Wall. While the inerrantist Mohler sees the story as a historical event (Mohler, "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks," 49-50), the errantist Enns sees it as a fictional narrative, arguing "a significant elaboration on a historical kernel, not a reliable record of a historical event." Peter Enns, "Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does," 93-96.

66 Conn, *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic*, 78.

same title *Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission*.<sup>67</sup> This theological commitment to the doctrine becomes more evident when applying the text to the practical aspect of mission.

In general, those who place more emphasis on the plain reading of the text tend to prioritize verbal evangelism over good works, though not dichotomize the two. This correlation is understandable because inerrantists, as Erickson observes, tend to place “a particularly high value upon retaining the basic content in the process of giving various expressions to the message” of the gospel.<sup>68</sup> For this group, retaining the basic structure and content of the biblical text is crucial since the meaning lays *in* the inspired texts, not “beneath, above, beyond the actual words of the Bible.”<sup>69</sup> Thus any proposal that appears to undermine the propositional nature of revelation is questioned. For instance, Vanhoozer’s approach that capitalizes on the Speech-Act theory<sup>70</sup> by giving credence to the Theodrama of the Bible,<sup>71</sup> not just the propositional text, as the authority has been called into question.<sup>72</sup> Christopher H. Wright, who argues that the authority of the text cannot be limited to just the meaning *in* the text but must also come from the larger authority to which the text points, namely the reality of God, reality of the biblical story, and the reality of God’s people,<sup>73</sup> has also not escaped the scrutiny of the Reformed Christians.

67 Millard J. Erickson, “Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission,” in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987*, 223–236. J.I. Packer, “Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission,” in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987*, 245–250.

68 Erickson, “Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission,” 233.

69 David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 247.

70 Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality or Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 208–214.

71 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, Ky: WJK Press, 2005), 37–114.

72 Paul Helm has strongly criticized Vanhoozer on the ground that his Theo-drama undermines the propositional aspect of revelation. Paul Helm, *Faith Form and Fashion: Classical Reformed Theology and Its Postmodern Critics* (Eugen, Oregon: Cascade Books: 2014), 130–178. Geisler argues that Vanhoozer’s use of Speech-Act denies the traditional understanding of propositional revelation and therefore, in essence, denies the historic doctrine of inerrancy. Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 135–142.

73 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand*

Wright's missional application has been challenged on the ground that he illegitimately broadens the authority of the text.<sup>74</sup> While people like Wright see evangelism and good works as equally important aspects of the mission, people like Hasselgrave place greater emphasis on such texts as Matt 28:18-19 and prioritize the verbal proclamation of the gospel.<sup>75</sup>

One of the key-factors in mission for the Reformed Christians then is the prioritization of the gospel without dichotomization from good works. Echoing the famous Dutch theologian J. H. Bavinck, who saw the glorification of God through the planting of churches and conversion of the heathens as the ultimate goal of the mission,<sup>76</sup> Kostenberger and O'Brien conclude their extensive study of the Bible on mission thus, "[T]he ultimate goal of the divine mission is the glory of God—that he might be known and honored for who he really is . . . ." <sup>77</sup> The keyword for our purpose here is *known* since for them the proclamation of the gospel occupies primary or the initial task.<sup>78</sup> However, they also acknowledge that evangelism and making disciples are not the only goal in mission. Making disciples accompanies Christians living out authentic faith. Even though they prioritize evangelism, they do not dichotomize good works from evangelism. Carson agrees with them when he contends, "Because the gospel is news, good news . . . it is to be announced . . . Though it properly grounds ethics, aphorisms, and systematics, it is none of these: it is *news*, and therefore must be publicly announced."<sup>79</sup> But immediately

*Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 53–54.

74 John Wind, "Not Always Right: Critiquing Christopher Wright's Paradigmatic Application of the Old Testament to the Socio-Economic Realm," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 2 (2015): 88–98.

75 Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 136.

76 J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1960), 155–156.

77 Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, New studies in biblical theology: 11 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 263.

78 *Ibid.*, 268.

79 D.A. Carson, "What Is the Gospel?—Revisited," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, C. Samuel Storms, et al., (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 158.

he goes on to add, “But I do not see how one can be said to be truly preaching the gospel without spelling out the demands that the gospel makes.”<sup>80</sup> This ‘prioritized’ gospel, though without being dichotomized from good works, then is the result of their hermeneutics.

In the footsteps of the notable figure John Stott, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert conclude their book on mission—a book, according to Carson’s endorsing words, is the best one among the many books to have recently appeared on mission—thus

We agree! Fully, wholeheartedly, unreservedly, and without the slightest contrary shiver in the liver, we agree! We are of the strong opinion that the Bible teaches that we Christians are to be people of both declaration and demonstration, and that our churches are to be communities of both declaration and demonstration....<sup>81</sup> [However] It is not the church’s responsibility to right every wrong or to meet every need, though we have biblical motivation to do some of both. It is our responsibility, however—our unique mission and plain priority—that is unpopular, impractical gospel message gets told, that neighbors and nations may know that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God and that by believing, they may have life in his name.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, the Reformed Conservative Evangelicals have found a way to live out their faith. Their passionate commitment to the doctrine of inerrancy has not only pushed them to a haven to celebrate their victory, but their commitment to the inspired text of the Bible has stirred them to live and carry out God’s mission, albeit in a manner that is consistent with their interpretation of the Bible.

### ***The Purified Message: A Contextualized Strategy***

The Reformed commitment to a particular form of mission—in our case,

80 Ibid., 163.

81 Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2011), 223.

82 Ibid., 249.

the prioritizing of the verbal proclamation without dichotomizing from good works—yields a specific kind of contextualization. Erickson and Packer argue, respectively, that holding to the doctrine of “inerrancy leads to a more complete and more consistent forms of [missional] implications”<sup>83</sup> and allows Christians to bring out the text of the Bible “purely and precisely via his lips in its application to those who he addresses.”<sup>84</sup> Those who affirm the doctrine are likely to adhere more strictly not only to the biblical categories but also to the words of the Scripture in translation, interpretation, and theologization. A case in point is the approach taken by the members of Biblical Missiology who are uncompromising about the propositional truth of the Scripture and are skeptical of contextualizing methods that uncritically borrows from social sciences, anthropological insights, and cultural and religious categories.<sup>85</sup> Hasselgrave asserts, “[T]extual accuracy is more important than supposed cultural relevance” since the words of the Bible are *God-breathed*.<sup>86</sup>

The philosophical underpinning behind the Reformed approach to contextualization is the commitment in the ability of human reason, when exercised rightly, to understand and interpret the text accurately so that what they know is what God is communicating.<sup>87</sup> They are committed that the Bible when read as intended, “*accurately reflect[s]* what Scripture teaches . . . [so that they] can say that [their] interpretation is true and biblical.”<sup>88</sup> Contra Eugene Nida, who developed the Dynamic Equivalence Bible-translation Theory—whose influence is visible in organizations such as SIL (Summer Institute of Language), WBT

83 Erickson, “Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission,” 223.

84 Packer, “Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission,” 249.

85 Biblical Missiology Statement of Practice for Missions, “Biblical Missiology,” accessed September 20, 2017, <http://biblicalmissiology.org/>.

86 Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 263.

87 Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 65.

88 Steven J. Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and recent Proposal for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, eds. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, Justin Taylor (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 173.

(Wycliffe Bible Translators), UBS (United Bible Societies),<sup>89</sup> and some other institutions—RCEs are convinced that language in itself is God’s gift and not merely a human invention. Therefore, the Supra-cultural truths can be deduced from Scripture and communicated across cultures. The Reformed Christians are more optimistic that in spite of one’s context one can access the objective meaning of the text. Such conviction, on the one hand, allows them to focus on a rigorous study of the text, yielding volumes of biblical and systematic theology books. The same conviction, on the other hand, prompts them to be suspicious of any claim that relativizes absolute claims.

However, over-confidence in one’s ability to deduce facts from the Scripture also has led some Reformed Christians to point fingers at others too quickly. A case in point is that of John MacArthur calling N.T. Wright’s *New Perspective on Paul* a heresy.<sup>90</sup> The outsiders see this kind of conduct as uncharitable. While not all RCEs share MacArthur’s sentiment, it would be fair to admit that their doctrinal rigidity—for good or ill—yields a more constrained approach to contextualization.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that how one views and interprets the Bible influences the decisions s/he makes regarding what doctrinal battle deserves fighting for, what and how boundaries are drawn for Christian fellowships, and how mission is conceived and executed. To substantiate the thesis, the paper has drawn attention to how the Reformed Conservative Evangelicals’ commitment to the verbal and plenary inspiration compelled them to see the doctrine of inerrancy as an irreconcilable doctrine that must be fought for even to the exclusion of those who bear the name of Christ. But at

89 Philip C. Stine, *Let the Words be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene A. Nida* (Atlanta, GA.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 1-67. Stine remarks that the adoption of Nida’s theory of Bible translation correlates with the increase of indigenous theologies, p. 6.

90 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZJEZiLFYHk>

the same time, commitment to inerrancy has become a stimulating factor for cultivating a broader Christian fellowship. Additionally, a strong emphasis on the doctrine has also affected how the Scripture is interpreted and applied in contexts. Thus how one looks at the text and interprets it have effects far beyond one's conscious awareness.

Two particular points seem appropriate. First, since inerrancy is both biblical/theological and logical/philosophical upshot, it should at least be on the same ground that a rejection or disagreement must be voiced. Second, it is incumbent upon all Christians to carefully approach the text, as it will determine how one determines doctrinal battlefield, demarcates relational boundaries, and decides missional frontiers.

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# Kingdom of Grace and Kingdom of Glory: A Reassessment of Historic Views of Christ's Kingdom

Zach Doppelt

KEYWORDS:

Historic Premillennialism	Dispensationalism	
Kingdom of Grace	Kingdom of Grace	Kingdom of Glory
Patristics	Reformation	*Eschaton*

ABSTRACT:

Those who hold to a premillennial hermeneutic of the *eschaton* have espoused two main interpretations, dispensationalism and historic premillennialism, with the former largely displaced by the latter.

This article presents the case that a third option deserves attention as the true “historic” premillennial interpretation (and even connects to certain amillennial thought processes). And, based on the language of various authors, this interpretation may be called the “kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory” paradigm. In order to demonstrate this thesis, the article will begin with a description of historic premillennialism as the main view considered as that of premillennial writers throughout the ages, then the article will then evaluate extensive quotations of post reformation and patristic authors. Finally, key biblical citations will be evaluated briefly. Within the thematic material of these quotations, contrasts from other premillennial views will be noted.

## INTRODUCTION

The question of the messianic kingdom in both scholarly and popular literature is well documented. Classic categories of the millennium are generally included in the discussion<sup>1</sup>, but scholars have further clarified details within these perspectives. For those who hold a conviction that the kingdom is best understood in terms of premillennialism, dispensationalism was the driving force for much of contemporary evangelicalism during the latter part of the Nineteenth century into the Twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> However, this trend was not well received among the scholarly community save a few examples.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the latter part of the Twentieth century a resurgence of premillennialism as a viable eschatological option resurfaced among scholars, especially with the further advancement of Biblical theology in evangelical thought. Thus, scholars have re-examined premillennial views in contrast to popular level dispensational premillennialism that are academic, historic and Biblical. However, most scholars have focused almost exclusively on a view called “historic premillennialism.”<sup>5</sup>

I believe there may be a different view of the kingdom that is neither dispensational nor “historic premillennial”(yet contains elements both) within the Patristic writings as well as the post Reformation period, and may do more justice to the Biblical text. Furthermore, I believe this view

1 By this I simply mean the discussion of pre, a, and post millennial ideas.

2 For an analysis concerning dispensational premillennialism and its impact on contemporary Christian thought, see “R. Todd Mangum, Mark S. Sweetnam. *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Publishing, 2009).”

3 See also “Paul Wilkinson. *For Zion’s Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby (Studies in Evangelical History and Thought)* (Bletchley: Paternoster Publishing, 2007).”

4 Certain schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary were created to fit this need, yet were likely in the minority of theological discourse.

5 See “Craig L. Blomberg, Sung Wook Chung, eds. *A Case for historic premillennialism: An Alternative to ‘Left Behind Eschatology’* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

is actually simpler and less systematized. This view may be termed “The kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory”<sup>6</sup> paradigm.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the purpose of this essay is first to describe “historic premillennialism” as it is the default premillennial view among scholars. Next, I will describe the “kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory” view in its recent forms from the Protestant Reformation onward, specifically noting 19th century premillennial thought. I will then seek to trace elements of this view within the writings of the Patristics.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I will conclude with an examination of relevant Biblical texts. Throughout this essay I will be contrasting the “kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory” view with “historic premillennialism.”

## “HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM”

Within this field of study, much of the research has relied on a particular stream of thought, specifically relying on the already/not yet paradigm first developed in seed form in the writings of C.H. Dodd and further developed by George Eldon Ladd. The uniqueness of this view was dependant on the concept that the kingdom in its messianic form was inaugurated at Jesus first coming. Ladd elaborates on this inauguration aspect of Dodd when he writes that he “conceives of the kingdom as the absolute, the ‘wholly other’ which has entered into time and space in the

6 I have chosen this language drawing from relevant historic commentaries.

7 Here is where a point of clarification is necessary. I do embrace many elements of the kingdom that are now. In fact, in many ways this is precisely my point. Where I believe history and theology support my thesis is on this simplicity, for the inaugurated kingdom hermeneutic places so much emphasis on the physical manifestations here and now. Thus, there are hybrid positions that may be posited further between that of say, Russell Moore and the thesis of this essay. For a potential example, see “Graeme Goldsworthy, ‘The Kingdom of God as Hermeneutic Grid,’ *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (SBJT 12:1 Spring 2008), p. 4. Accessed Online October 12, 2017 via Galaxie Journals.

8 Perhaps in future articles I will contrast this view more thoroughly from the other two views mentioned in this introduction, utilizing key Biblical passages.

person of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>9</sup> However, he makes it clear that Dodd did not go far enough in anticipating the future *eschaton* in the New Testament writings<sup>10</sup>, thus leading Ladd to develop an “already/not yet” paradigm. It is statements such as the following that clarify Ladd’s meaning:

Jesus power over demons was the disclosure that the powers of the Age to Come have invaded the present evil Age. It was the proof that the Kingdom of God, which belongs to age of the future when Christ comes in glory, has already penetrated this age.”<sup>11</sup>

It is in Ladd’s overlap of the future *eschaton* of glory with Christ’s first coming that gives this “inaugurated eschatological” view its substance as well as its newness in kingdom interpretation, yet this perspective quickly became the predominant view of the kingdom among scholars espousing a premillennial perspective. So pervasive in evangelical thought, it is widely considered to be the historic premillennial view of the Patristic writers and Reformational premillennialists. Thus it has been identified as “historic premillennialism,” primarily in contrast with dispensational premillennialism.<sup>12</sup> Further, Ladd’s views have given rise to various forms of “kingdom now” views within the Charismatic movement. It is Ladd’s expression that “men may already experience the powers of The Age to Come”<sup>13</sup> that has fuelled much of dominionist “kingdom now” expressions, specifically in Charismatic circles. For example, Wimber writes concerning Ladd, “I realized how his work on the kingdom of God formed a theological basis for power evangelism.”<sup>14</sup> This should be no

9 George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1959.) p. 15.

10 For further elaboration on the continuity and discontinuity with Dodd and his “realized eschatology”, see, George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1974.) pp. 56. It may be of note that Dodd is quoted quite frequently in Ladd’s theological work.

11 Ladd *Op cit.* p. 48

12 See “Craig L. Blomberg, Sung Wook Chung, eds. *A Case for historic premillennialism: An Alternative to ‘Left Behind Eschatology’* (Grand Rapids: Baker. 2009).

13 *Ibid.*

14 John Wimber, Kevin Springer. *Power Evangelism* (Ventura: Regal. 2009). p. 19. I

surprise as Ladd was influenced by Dodd, a functional postmillennialist.<sup>15</sup>

However, the question may be raised whether this view is indeed worthy of its name “historic premillennialism,” given recent clarification. Is it, in fact, the view of the early church fathers or even any premillennialist at the time of the Reformation?<sup>16</sup> Some scholars, (though in favour of the developments by Ladd, Vos and others) recognize it as just that, a development. Moore favourably writes:

And yet, following Ladd’s lead, evangelical theology and biblical scholarship has made great strides over the past century toward the development of a Kingdom ecclesiology. Indeed, evangelical theology has moved toward a virtual consensus of the Kingdom as both “already” and “not yet,” with the church as the initial manifestation of the Kingdom of God, thus eschewing such ideas as, on the one hand, the concept of the church as synonymous with the Kingdom, and, on the other, the concept of the church as a parenthesis in God’s Kingdom program.<sup>17</sup>

One challenge in differentiating between “historic premillennialism” and the kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory paradigm is the idea of futurism. The resurgence of futurism in the 19th century has been rightly attributed to “S.R. Maitland, James Todd, and William Burgh”<sup>18</sup> and possibly “the first scholar in relatively modern times who returned to the patristic futuristic interpretation was a Spanish Jesuit names

am aware that a quote does not necessitate a connection, but the consistency between interpretations is striking.

15 For a helpful analysis of Dodd’s eschatological views, see “Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. 1979). pp. 294-297.” To call Dodd a “functional postmillennialist” is an exaggeration on my part, but in fairness his view on the *eschaton* was overtly present, even denying the second coming of Jesus. Though Ladd acknowledges disagreement, influence cannot be denied.

16 *Ibid.* See introduction.

17 Russell D. Moore, Robert E. Sagers. “The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (*SBJT* 12:1 Spring 2008). p. 71 Accessed Online September 29, 2017 via Galaxie Journals.

18 George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1956.) p. 37.

Ribera”<sup>19</sup><sup>20</sup> However, one’s view of the interpretation of Revelation does not necessitate similarity, for both dispensationalists and historic premillennialists alike share this trait with the Patristics. The real question lies in the essence of the views at hand. As I progress through this article, the Futurist interpretation, while important, will be emphasized less than the real substance of the various kingdom views. I believe this is indeed a secondary issue to separation of grace and glory.

## POST REFORMATION

Three influential commentators of post reformation England are Matthew Poole, John Gill and John Bunyan. Gill and Bunyan were premillennialists<sup>21</sup> while Matthew Poole was an amillennialist. However, all three described Christ’s kingdom in the language of “kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory” with a particular note of division. It is this distinct division between the two phases of Christ’s kingdom that sets their views apart from contemporary “historic premillennialism.” Gill writes in his commentary on Matthew:

“the good seed are the children of the kingdom: they which are designed by the good seed, are such, for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared, to whom it is bequeathed, and who are appointed to it; who are possessed of the kingdom of grace here, and are heirs of the kingdom of glory; and have both a meetness for it, and a right unto it, being the children of God by adoption, and that appearing by regeneration”<sup>22</sup>

Yet, in terms of the kingdom of grace he makes it clear that “and concerning the kingdom of grace, which is spiritual and internal, and which lies not in external things, as meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy;

19 *Ibid.*

20 See also Wilkinson *Op cit.* p. 188-189 where a strong case for Manuel Lacunza is made via Irving.

21 While some have argued Gill was a Postmillennialist or at least added Postmillennial elements, his commentary on Revelation, specifically chapter 20 makes it clear he espoused premillennialism.

22 John Gill, “Matthew 13:38” *John Gill Commentary* (electronic ed. Igor Apps.)

and concerning the kingdom of glory”<sup>23</sup> And he further clarifies in his commentary on Revelation 1:

The saints are made “kings” by Christ; they are so now; they have received a kingdom of grace, which cannot be taken away; and they have the power of kings over sin, Satan, and the world, and all their enemies; and they live and fare like kings, and are clothed like them, in rich apparel, the righteousness of Christ; and are attended as kings, angels being their lifeguards; and they will appear much more so hereafter, when they shall reign on earth with Christ a thousand years, shall sit upon the same throne, and have a crown of life and righteousness given them, and at last be introduced into the kingdom of glory. And they become such by being the sons of God, which power and privilege they receive from Christ, and so are heirs of God, and joint heirs with him, and by being united to him. And he also makes them “priests” to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and those of a broken heart, and of a contrite spirit, and even their souls and bodies, as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice unto God, by anointing and sanctifying them by his Spirit: and they are made such by him.

What is important to note is the simple division between the present *spiritual* aspects of Christ’s kingdom vs. the coming glory. For Gill, the language of “*power over kings*” and “*clothed with rich apparel*” is to be understood as “*the righteousness of Christ.*” Though one might argue that Gill sees overlap throughout his commentary, the difference between his words and Ladd’s are striking, as Ladd says, “this deliverance is accomplished the power of the future kingdom of glory has come upon men in a secret, quiet form to work in their midst.”<sup>24</sup> It is this subtle difference of language that separates the kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory paradigm from Ladd’s inaugurated eschatology, or from Dodd’s realized eschatology.

Poole<sup>25</sup> utilizes similar language concerning Matthew chapter 3:2.

23 *Ibid* Acts 8:12

24 Ladd *Op Cit.* p. 67.

25 It must be noted that by this point in Poole’s commentary Poole has passed away and the work was completed by various nonconformist editors. Nonetheless, the spirit and

This further demonstrating this simple division between the phases of the kingdom (first in Gospel grace, then of glory):

For the kingdom of heaven is at hand; that blessed state of the church (foretold by the prophets) under the Messiah, wherein God will exhibit his Son as the King in Zion, and exert his power and kingdom, both extensively, subduing all nations to the obedience of his gospel, and intensively, in all the administrations of his government; for the kingdom of heaven is **not to be understood here of the kingdom of glory, but of the kingdom of grace** (emphasis mine), in all the administrations of it. This passage containeth the argument upon which the Baptist in his sermons pressed, repentance and faith, and obedience to the will of God revealed.<sup>26</sup>

And:

[k]ingdom of God; by which some understand the kingdom of his glory (as the phrase is used, Luke 18:24,25); others understand it of the manifestation of Christ under the gospel state, or the vigour, power, and effect of the gospel, and the grace thereof. By seeing of it, is meant enjoying, and being made partakers of it, as the term is used, Psalms 16:10 John 16:10 Revelation 18:7. The Jews promised their whole nation a place in the kingdom of the Messiah, as they were born of Abraham, Matthew 3:9; and the Pharisees promised themselves much from their observation of the law, &c. Christ lets them know neither of these would do, but unless they were wholly changed in their hearts and principles (for so much being born again signifieth; not some partial change as to some things, and in some parts) they could never have any true share, either in the kingdom of grace in this life, or in the kingdom of glory in that life which is to come. It is usual by the civil laws of countries, that none enters into the possession of an earthly kingdom but by the right of birth; and for the obtaining the kingdom of heaven, there must be a new birth, a heavenly renovation of the whole man, soul, body, and spirit, to give him a title, by the wise and unchangeable constitution

mindset of the earlier books he had completed remained consistent through the hand of the later commentators.

26 Matthew Poole. *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Volume III: Matthew-Revelation* (Peabody: Hendrickson. 2010) p. 13.

of God in the gospel, and to qualify him for the enjoyment of it.<sup>27</sup>

Even Bunyan writes, "As the glory of the grace of God will, at this day, be wonderfully manifest in and over his city; so also at that day will be seen the glory of his power."<sup>28</sup> In Bunyan's case his language is valuable. For, his influences were undoubtedly contemporary Puritanism blended with the Reformer's doctrine before him (thus demonstrating his views weren't created in a vacuum). English writers such as he and Thomas Hayne for example, should be understood differently from such views as overtly influenced by Rabbi Elias, such as the German writer Johann Heinrich Alsted.<sup>29,30,31</sup> Thus, Bunyan's millenarianism is best understood as a development, yet continuation of the Christian (reformation and pre-reformation) ideas before him.

Therefore, based on the language of these various authors taken together as a whole, two phases of Christ's kingdom may be identified: the kingdom of grace now (spiritual) and the kingdom of glory later<sup>32</sup>

27 *Ibid.* pp. 289-290.

28 John Bunyan, "The Holy City or New Jerusalem" *The Works of John Bunyan: Allegorical, Figurative, and Symbolical* (Glasgow: W.G. Blackie & Sons. 1853). p. 406.

29 Crawford Gribben. *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Revised Edition) (Eugene: Wipf and Stock., 2008). pp. 22,144.

30 This differentiation must be noted, for though Owen, Gill etc. were Hebraists in their own right, the influence of Cabbalistic and mystical Jewish interpretations are found throughout Alsted's writings. Further, it is clear that Alsted was heavily influenced by metaphysical speculation that I believe was lacking in some of the English writers mentioned. For a discussion on Alsted and other metaphysicians see "Lynne Courter Boughton. 'Supralapsarianism and the Role of Metaphysics in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Theology' *Westminster Theological Journal* (WTJ 48:1 Spring 1986).

31 Rabbi Elias' influence over Alsted may be in question, but it is generally accepted that Alsted maintained hermetic or occultic philosophies. How much Cabbalism or gnosticism influenced his millennialism is an inquiry worthy of further elaboration. For an introductory analysis see, Howard Hotson, *Paradise Postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013)pp. 1-23.

32 The inclusion of these quotes is not to suggest there is no overlap to the various phases of the kingdom. The point being made here is that a simple and distinct difference between the here and now seems prevalent in the minds of these authors.

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BRITISH AND IRISH APOCALYPTICISM

As noted earlier, futurism rose to prominence in the 19th century.<sup>33</sup> A futurist interpretation was further developed by Darby and the early Plymouth Brethren.<sup>34</sup> It is in this century that a pronounced intersection and interweaving of prophetic and millennial ideals takes place. Surprising to many, Edward Irving lies at the centre of much of the debate. It has been widely accepted that Irving translated the work of Manuel Lacunza<sup>35</sup>, entitled “The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty.” While Irving remained a historicist, his influence upon 19th century Millennialism is real. Many have attempted at making connections between he and dispensationalism,<sup>36</sup> but interestingly, he may have influenced Reformed premillennial thought even more.

While noting the errors of Irving’s Christology, Bonar recounts M’Cheyne’s fondness for Irving.<sup>37</sup> Further, it must be noted Bonar’s acceptance premillennialism vis-a-vis Edward Irving, for “From the time Dr. Bonar this mode of prophetic interpretation as taught by Irving, it dominated and complexioned all his views.”<sup>3839</sup> In turn, Bonar was part of a greater milieu<sup>40</sup> that shared a great interest in the Jews, their eschatology and most importantly their reception of the Gospel.<sup>41</sup> This expectancy is

33 *Op cit.* Ladd. p. 37

34 *Op cit.* Wilkinson pp. 199-201.

35 *Ibid.* pp. 186 ff.

36 *Ibid.* p. 185.

37 Robert Murray M’Cheyne, Andrew Alexander Bonar *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray M’Cheyne: Minister of St. Peter’s Church, Dundee* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co. J. Nisbet & Co. And J. Johnstone & Co. 1846.) p. 25.

38 Horatius Bonar *Horatius Bonar, DD.: A Memorial* (London: James Nisbet & Co. 1889). p. 99.

39 *Op cit.* Ladd p. 36.

40 Here it must be understood that the prophetic milieu of the 19th century is completely inter-related. Most *ad-hominem* arguments levelled against specific writers of this era fail to see to understand this.

41 For a further description of the interrelated nature of the prophetic movement as it related to the Jews, see, Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-*

further clarified when he writes “the fullness of the Gentiles , will be the signal for the judgments which are to usher in crisis of earth’s history, and the deliverance of Israel, and the long expected kingdom.”<sup>42</sup>

Within Bonar’s writings, it becomes increasingly clear that he holds neither the optimism of “historic premillennialism” nor the radical distinction of the growing dispensational movement (for he remained a covenantal writer). However, his acceptance of a pessimistic end to this age preceding the coming kingdom is very akin to the dispensational mindset of the time.

Bonar was not alone in this. J.C. Ryle, the celebrated Anglican Evangelical wrote:

It is more than probable that they apply to a second siege of Jerusalem, which is yet to take place, when Israel has returned to their own land - and a second tribulation on the inhabitants thereof, which shall only be stopped by the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup>

Here Ryle maintains a strong emphasis on the Jewish people, including but not limited to a time of tribulation at the close of this age. This is actually quite consistent with both “historic premillennialism” as well as dispensationalism; however, in his comments on the Lord’s prayer he states:

By His kingdom we mean first, the kingdom of grace which God sets up and maintains in the hearts of all living members of Christ, by His Spirit and word. But we mean chiefly, the kingdom of glory which shall one day be set up, when Jesus shall come the second time, and “all men shall know Him from the least to the greatest.”<sup>44</sup>

And,

*Atlantic World, 1500-2000* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 2011). pp. 85-87.

42 Barry Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, n.d.) p. 10; H. Bonar, “The Jew” *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* (July, 1870):209-211.

43 John Charles Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: St. Matthew* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860). pp. 317-318.

44 *Ibid.* p. 51.

He shall come the second time as the King of all the earth, with all royal majesty. The princes and great men of this world shall themselves stand before His throne to receive an eternal sentence.<sup>45</sup>

With even more clarity, Ryle urges his readers to understand that “so surely He shall come with clouds in glory, and reign on earth as king.”<sup>46</sup> Ryle further explains “that Christ is to one day have a complete kingdom in this world, - that His kingdom **is not yet set up**, - but that it will be set up in the day of His return (emphasis mine)”<sup>47</sup> Here is where we must come back to an understanding of influence and historic context. Often various forms of covenantal premillennialism that are not dispensational in nature are equated with “historic premillennialism;” however, it must be noted that men like Ryle, Spurgeon and Bonar were well acquainted with earlier premillennial writers (long before Dodd and Ladd existed) and their language reveals and reiterates this common theme: The Lord’s kingdom of grace is now, and primarily in the “hearts of all living members of Christ,”<sup>48</sup> while the kingdom of glory will arrive when Jesus returns *in glory*. The influence of earlier theologians, combined with these renewed emphases reveals their hermeneutic of the *eschaton* to be a continuation of the particular kingdom view of those before. The temptation might be to compare language of these writers with those such as Ladd, and find similarities, yet taking a step back, one can see a differing emphasis and greater discontinuity than Ladd. In contrast, Ladd, the author of “historic premillennialism” blends and morphs the two phases of the kingdom.

45 *Ibid* p. 322.

46 J.C. Ryle. *Coming Events and Present Duties* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1867) p. 56

47 *Ibid*.

48 Note that to some extent this understanding of the present form of the kingdom is what Goldsworthy argues against, yet it also must be understood that Goldsworthy specifically had in view the moderately quietistic/Keswick influences on modern evangelicalism when he wrote “The principal focus becomes ‘Jesus living in me,’ rather than the historic gospel of Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection for me,” and “The evangelical propensity to focus on the work of God in us is sometimes expressed as the reigning of Jesus in our hearts.” See Goldsworthy *Op cit*.

## THE PATRISTICS

As in other eras, it is essential to consider the historic milieu when examining the early church fathers. Often one's view is superimposed upon their writings without taking note of the issues they were dealing with and the questions they were attempting to answer. Otherwise, one can make the Patristics fit into any sort of theological construct one desires. Earlier, I noted that the "kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory" eschatological view is actually simpler than both "historic premillennialism" and dispensationalism. This is where I believe the Patristics support the thesis of this article.

The assumption made is that "The already/not yet structure of the Kingdom ... was not new, ... in the Patristic era, Justin Martyr, for example, appealed to the already/not yet Kingdom fulfillment as his hermeneutical key in his famous dialogue with Trypho."<sup>49</sup> But I believe a careful examination of their writings demonstrates a greater dichotomy.

In a brief comment on Isaiah 66, the author of 2 Clement speaks of the "day of his appearing"<sup>50</sup> and "the unbelievers will see his glory and might... when they see the kingdom of this world belongs to Jesus."<sup>51</sup><sup>52</sup> Further, the author of 1 Clement writes of the kingdom as yet future at the time of the appearance saints "who will be revealed when the kingdom of Christ visits us."<sup>53</sup> Yet for the author *μετανοιας χαριτι* seems to be the emphasis of the present age.<sup>54</sup> H. Wayne House also noted future kingdom expectancy in the author of 2 Clement as "Clement of Rome wrote, 'Let us expect, therefore, hour by hour, the kingdom of God . . . since we know

49 Moore *Op cit.* p. 75.

50 Michael W. Holmes, ed. "2 Clement," *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) p. 161.

51 *Ibid.*

52 I believe the emphasis by the author on unbelievers seeing "δοξαν αυτου και το κρατος" at the time of His coming is further evidence of the future nature of the glory of the Messiah.

53 "1 Clement," Michael W. Holmes, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) p. 113.

54 *Ibid.* p. 54.

not the day of the appearing of God.”<sup>55</sup>

In like manner Eusebius recounts the ideas of Papias who “said there would be a corporeal reign of Christ on this very earth”<sup>56</sup>

Justin Martyr writes concerning the prophet Isaiah that

“[s]ome have reference to the first advent of Christ, in which He is preached as inglorious, obscure, and of mortal appearance: but others had reference to His second advent, when He shall appear in glory and above the clouds”<sup>57</sup>

For Justin, there is a very clear line of demarcation between the two advents. Though he does describe Jesus power over demons, he continues to demonstrate the differing purposes for these two advents “that He shall be first humble as a man, and then exalted.”<sup>58</sup> This first advent of humiliation and salvation, then of glory is what Justin uses to demonstrate the fulfilment of the prophets’ words in the person and work of the Messiah Jesus. Though Justin Martyr does interpret the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12ff.) as something that will be obtained by the Church:

and along with Abraham we shall inherit the holy land, when we shall receive the inheritance for an endless eternity, being children of Abraham through the like faith.<sup>59</sup>

There is a yet future emphasis.

55 H. Wayne House. “Premillennialism in The Ante-Nicene Church” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (BSAC 169:675 July 2012). p. 274. Accessed Online October 12, 2017 via Galaxie Journals.

56 Eusebius, *Eusebius Ecclesiastical History* trans. by C.F. Cruse (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998) p. 105. The benefit of such a quote is to reinforce the idea of glorious premillennial coming with subsequent reigning of the saints clearly separate from this present age.

57 Justin Martyr “Dialogue with Trypho” Schaff, Roberts, Donaldson eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (electronic ed. CCEL). p. 968.

58 *Ibid.* p. 1016.

59 Justin Martyr, “Christians are the Holy People Promised to Abraham. They Have Been Called Like Abraham” *Dialogue with Trypho Trans.* (electronic ed. Crosswire Bible Society).

## BIBLICAL EXAMINATION

In dealing with relevant biblical texts, it must be insured that context is taken into consideration to avoid mere “proof-texting” based on shared terms. The question must be asked, “What do these words mean?”

The overall premise that I have set forth in this article is quite simple. The historic eschatological view is less complex than proponents of the various modern viewpoints would have you believe. The kingdom is best understood in terms of spiritual and soteriological now (grace), while Jesus’s second coming inaugurates a visible, physical manifestation of the kingdom (glory) later. I believe the conclusions of those cited earlier is consistent with the simplicity of the biblical text.

For example, in 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter<sup>60</sup> uses grace and glory in regard to both the first and second coming of Christ. While holiness in the midst of trials and suffering are laid out as applicable themes, I agree with Williams when he writes, “ who are being kept by the power of God for an eschatological salvation that has invaded this present evil age and that will be revealed on the last day.”<sup>61</sup>

It is within this eschatological context, then, that the language of grace and glory are used almost interchangeably, yet still maintain a definite and distinct locus of meaning. Note Peter’s language in verse 11, “προμαρτυρόμενον τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας” Peter draws on the Messianic prophetic motif in both letters, utilizing the language of Isaiah 53 and the suffering Messiah. Here we see suffering, then glory. Peter just noted the prophetic implications of the grace that would come at Jesus’ first coming in verse 10, before proceeding to the noted suffering and the following glory.

60 I assume Petrine authorship here, yet to defend this point is outside the scope of this article.

61 Jarvis J. Williams. “Sermon: ‘Don’t Be Surprised When You Suffer For Christ, But Rejoice!’” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (SBJT 18:1 Spring 2014). p. 145. Accessed Online February 6, 2018 via Galaxie Journals.

Now, it must be observed, that for Peter the sufferings of Christ are connected to the salvific plan of grace (specifically born out in chapter 3)

This motif is then continued, though with some interchanging of these elements are play, Peter continues this theme:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation (1 Pet. 4:12 NASB).”

In the Gospel accounts, the glory is often set on the future elements of the *eschaton*. Two such examples are found in Matt. 24:30 “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (AV),” and in Matt. 25:31 “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory (AV).”<sup>62</sup> This concept is further elaborated in Luke 19:11 “Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.”

A first century Jew likely would have understood these statements as having specific application toward the glorious messianic kingdom in which they longed,<sup>63</sup> yet the Gospel of John states, “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, (Jn. 1:17 AV).”

Finally, in Rom. 5:20-21 we read “The Law came in so that the

62 Compare Matt. 19:28 and Rev. 20:4-6 and a future reign (kingdom language) while Christ rules on His glorious throne (language of glory) is almost indisputable. The only questions that remain are the classic debates on the length and type of millennial kingdom.

63 For an interesting look at the views of the kingdom prevalent in Second Temple Judaism see “David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Sages and Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2009). p. 259. It is interesting to note that Flusser places Jesus squarely within the “kingdom now” views of the sages as opposed to the apocalyptic zealots. I contend that Jesus’ spiritual kingdom falls within the sphere of the sages views, while his kingdom of glory fits within the eschatological expectancy of the zealots.

transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (NASB)”

Here, Paul speaks of the gospel in terms of grace “reigning.” This language alludes to a kingdom motif, specifically in terms of the gospel of grace reigning through righteousness. However; Paul, as his teaching progresses to the present circumstances of the believer, makes this poignant statement:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the **glory** that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and **glory** of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-21 NIV emphasis mine).

While it is true that the subject of kingdom and reigning are not specified here, a distinct break between the present realm of suffering with the next phase of glory is brought forth by the apostle.

Finally, I close with the following passage.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;  
if we endure, we will also reign with him;  
if we deny him, he also will deny us;  
if we are faithless, he remains faithful—  
for he cannot deny himself

(2 Tim. 2:8-13 ESV)

While I admittedly string quotations to demonstrate certain language used by the various authors mentioned, as well as giving brief examinations concerning biblical texts, I believe taking a step back we can see that a simple, clear eschatology may be the standard within historic orthodoxy, and that divergent eschatological schemes have simply over complicated plain exegesis. In reviewing just a handful of relevant biblical texts, this simple kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory paradigm so often quoted throughout history seems evident. However; further evaluations are needed to ascertain if the kingdom of grace/kingdom of glory paradigm merits a place as a (if not the) stand-alone Biblical eschatological hermeneutic.



Toward a Perichoretic  
Trinitarian Theology of Religions:  
A Response to Amos Yong,  
Harold Netland and Gerald McDermott

David Thang Moe

KEYWORDS:

| Perichoretic Trinity | Son and Spirit | Two Hands |  
| Revelation | Salvation | Mission | Church |

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to interact with the methodologies of evangelical trinitarian theology of religions developed by three leading evangelical theologians—Amos Yong, Harold Netland and Gerald McDermott. I will show how they converge and diverge with the strength and weakness of each. I will conclude the paper by proposing a perichoretic trinitarian theology of religions and expand their ideas from a trinitarian and kenotic ecclesiological perspective that is rooted in a perichoretic drama of the Father's sending of the Son and the Spirit as two hands within a single economic mission of salvation..

## INTRODUCTION

A general theology of religions has widely been developed within two main approaches: Theocentrism and Christocentrism. Pneumatocentrism is the recent turn. According to Veli-Matti Karkkainen, “the first Pentecostal Christian who has worked hard to construct a pneumatological [Trinitarian] theology of religions is Amos Yong who came originally from Malaysia in particular, Asia in general, where the challenge of religious diversity is most pervasive.”<sup>1</sup> Yong appeared on the world theological scene as a Pentecostal theologian with his first book *Discerning the Spirit(s)*.<sup>2</sup> Yong is unquestionably one of the most prolific and celebrated Asian theologians alive today.<sup>3</sup> As a Pentecostal scholar, Yong’s scholarship is deeply foundational in a pneumatological hermeneutics of theology and missiology. In response to a twofold theocentric and Christocentric theology of religions, Yong proposes a pneumatological approach as a complete fulfiller to the Trinity. While Yong’s methodology of Pneumatocentrism certainly offers a positive attitude toward other faiths with the recognition of the Spirit’s prevenient and cosmic presence in their cultures before Christians’ interaction with them, overemphasizing Pneumatocentrism may create the problem of limiting or de-emphasizing Jesus.

In response to this imbalanced emphasis and other theological issues, two of the leading evangelical theologians of religions, Gerald McDermott and Harold Netland have written one of the most substantive books on

1 Veli-Matti Karkkainen, “Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Inquiry,” in *International Review of Mission*, vol. 91, no. 316 (April 2002): 187-198 (at 192).

2 Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit (s): Toward a Pentecostal/Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Before this first book, Yong had published an article on a Pneumatological Theology of Religions in 1998. See Amos Yong, “The Turn to Pneumatology in Christian Theology of Religions: Conduit or Detour,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3-4 (1998): 39-65.

3 See Yong’s CV, <https://www.fuller.edu/faculty/amos-yong/> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

a Trinitarian theology of religions from an evangelical perspective.<sup>4</sup> In this book, they have not only appreciated, but also criticized Yong's Pneumatological approaches. One of their main critiques is Yong's separation of the Spirit from the Son. Their comments on Yong's methodologies are as follows;

So while Yong does not want to sever the two economies of the Son and the Spirit too sharply, he also does not want the economy of the Spirit to be subordinated to that of the Word by defining the Spirit's work with Christological criteria. Yet in his later work, he regularly downplays the usefulness of Christological criteria in discernment.<sup>5</sup>

In his review article<sup>6</sup> on their book, Yong's comments are as follows;

While evangelical thinking about the religions can remain disjunctive [apologetic] at the discursive level, evangelical mission vis-à-vis those in other faiths demands a more dynamic Trinitarian praxis than that developed by authors. I thus propose a more Pneumatologically informed Trinitarian theology of holistic Christian mission to undergird evangelical practice in our pluralistic world.<sup>7</sup>

Their mutual reaction against each other in respect is a point of departure for this paper. I believe that good theology is always born out of an appreciative and critical reaction against each other. Having said this, I will first interact with their proposals and methodologies of an evangelical trinitarian theology of religions. In my interaction with Yong, I am confined myself to his particular works on the intersection between Pneumatology and a theology of religions from a Pentecostal perspective. It is impossible to interact with all of his massive works in

4 Gerald R. McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

5 *Ibid.*, 56.

6 Amos Yong, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Pentecostal-Evangelical and Missiological Elaboration," in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, vol. 40, no. 4. (2016): 294-306.

7 *Ibid.*, 294.

this paper. Second, I will then show how Yong, Netland and McDermott converge and diverge with the strength and limitation of each. Finally I will conclude the paper by proposing a perichoretic trinitarian theology of religions and suggest an expansion of their ideas from a trinitarian ecclesiological perspective that is grounded in a perichoretic drama of the Father's sending of the Son and the Spirit as 'two hands' (Irenaeus) within a single economic mission of salvation.

## I. YONG'S PROPOSALS AND MCDERMOTT AND NETLAND'S REACTIONS

What are Yong's foundational Pneumatological proposals? From his first book *Discerning the Spirit(s)* (2000)<sup>8</sup> to his most recent book *The Hermeneutical Spirit* (2018),<sup>9</sup> Yong proposes the Spirit's universal ministry as the methodological and hermeneutical ground for a Pneumatological theology of religions in a pluralistic world. He takes up Acts 2 as a prime text for a Pneumatological approach, but he sees a larger picture of the Spirit's role in creation, recreation and eschatological vision of final creation.<sup>10</sup> He reads Genesis' narrative of creation and John's eschatological vision of final creation (Rev. 5:9; 14:6; 21:22-26) through the lens of Luke's Pentecostalism.<sup>11</sup> In his book *The Missiological Spirit*, he argues that reading in this broader way "Not only helps us to ground a pneumatological reflection in the doctrine of the Trinity, but also establishes the cosmic and creational scope of the work of the Spirit."<sup>12</sup> He calls this cosmic and global mission work of the Spirit "*Missio*

8 Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s)*.

9 Amos Yong, *The Hermeneutical Spirit: Theological Interpretations and Scriptural Reasoning for the 21st Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stocks, 2018).

10 Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). 36-42.

11 Amos Yong, *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 185.

12 *Ibid.*, 185.

*Spiritus*,”<sup>13</sup> in lieu of *Missio Dei*. I would like to call the former either ‘Pneumatocentric Trinitarianism’ or ‘Cosmo-centric Trinitarianism.’<sup>14</sup>

Second, Yong proposes a Pneumatological approach as a better way than that of a Christological approach for an interreligious dialogue. In the context of interreligious dialogue, he is dissatisfied with two methodologies. One is a methodology of proceeding from Christology, which ends up with an exclusive soteriology. In this regard, he even accuses Karl Barth of a “Christomonistic exclusivist.”<sup>15</sup> I will evaluate Yong’s critique of Barth’s Christology later. At this point, I would like to point out another methodology that makes Yong unhappy. In his review article, Yong is unhappy with the evangelical Christians’ negative approach to other faiths in terms of soteriological categories on the basis of rejecting religious salvation (exclusivism).<sup>16</sup> He calls for the need of going beyond these two unhealthy methodologies. For the latter, he proposes an anthropological approach, which recognizes divine providence and the beauty of human cultures as reflecting the image of God.<sup>17</sup> For the former, he proposes a Pneumatological approach, which invites Christians to discern and affirm the universal presence and work of the Spirit in other religious cultures as creation of God. For Yong, the goal of such twofold approach is to achieve an inclusive Pneumatological theology of religions.<sup>18</sup>

While affirming that a “Christological question plays a role in formulating a Trinitarian theology of religions, he proposes that a Pneumatological question could provide a way to move beyond the almost irreconcilable axioms of God’s salvific will and the historical particularity of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as savior for all people.”<sup>19</sup> For

13 Ibid., 185.

14 For the latter, see Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation To World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 66.

15 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 23.

16 Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 295.

17 Ibid., 295.

18 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 27.

19 Yong, *Discerning the Spirit (s)*, 94.

Yong, Christology is helpful in certain contexts, but it is not helpful outside the church.<sup>20</sup> In order to evaluate the cultures of other faiths positively, Yong argues that “We must deploy Pneumatological categories rather than impose Christological ones.”<sup>21</sup> This raises a critical question. Does Yong divorce the work of the Spirit from the work of Christ?<sup>22</sup>

Netland and McDermott think that Yong does separate the Spirit from the Son.<sup>23</sup> In my view, their assessment of Yong’s position on separating the Spirit from the Son is overstatement. I would rather argue that Yong as a Pentecostal theologian, does prioritize the Spirit (inclusivism or universality) over the Son (exclusivism or particularity). In his prioritizing the Spirit over the Son, Yong does not necessarily replace Christology with Pneumatology.<sup>24</sup> In his book *Hospitality and the Other*,<sup>25</sup> he explores the ethics of Christ’s hospitality and His embrace of the religious other in love (Jn. 4) as the mission models for the church’s hospitable engagement with the religious other.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, McDermott and Netland do not mention Yong’s missiology of hospitality in their discussion of his position on the Spirit and the Son. In their reading of Yong, they are too selective. To argue that Yong does not replace Christ with the Spirit, we should consult with his book *Spirit-Word-Community*,<sup>27</sup> in which he develops the need of holding what he calls the “trialectic of the Spirit, Word and Church.”<sup>28</sup> Also in his book *Beyond the Impasse*, Yong notes that “the turn

20 Ibid., 137.

21 Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 297.

22 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 56.

23 Ibid., 56. See also Keith E. Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 193. Johnson criticizes that “Yong’s Pneumatological approach severs the work of the Spirit from the work of the Son and the Father resulting in a kind of bitheism.”

24 In our meeting at his office at Fuller Theology Seminary on December 22, 2016, I asked Dr. Yong if he replaced Christology with Pneumatology. His response was ‘No.’

25 Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

26 Ibid., 126-128.

27 Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

28 Ibid., 230.

to a Pneumatological approach does not eliminate Christological issues,” but it transcends the Christological categories of exclusivism.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is true that Yong does prioritize the Spirit over Christ for proposing a more inclusive attitude to other faiths in the name of discerning the presence and work of the Spirit in their cultures. He outlines a three-tired process for discerning the work of the Spirit among other faiths. The first is “pneumatological-experiential one” which compares the religious experiences of other religions with Pentecostals looking for spiritual analogy of primal religion. The second is “moral-ethical one,” which looks for the ethics of other faiths.<sup>30</sup> This one is convergent to McDermott and Netland’s proposal of moral convergence between Christianity and other faiths.<sup>31</sup> The third is “theological-soteriological one,” which recognizes the religious symbols of other faiths as medias of transformation. Yong recognizes the tension of Spiritual presence and absence in other faiths. While the Spirit is present in other faiths, the Spirit can also be absent in terms of His confrontation against demonic powers.<sup>32</sup> This relates to Jesus’ ministry of exorcism, but Yong does not explicitly develop the role of the Spirit in Jesus’ ministry.

Third, Yong rejects the idea of subordinating the Spirit to the Son. In arguing against the subordination of the Spirit to the Son, Yong adopts George Khodr’s idea of the distinctions between the economies of the Spirit and the Son.<sup>33</sup> Though there is reciprocity between the Son and the Spirit, Kohdr stresses their hypostatic independence and distinguishes the twofold economy of the two hands, thus allows him to look for a dependently work of the Spirit in other religions.<sup>34</sup> In his review article,

29 Ibid., 35.

30 Yong, *Discerning the Spirit (s)*, 251

31 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 193-196.

32 Ibid., 131.

33 Amos Yong, “A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission,” in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 33, no. 2 (April 2005): 173-191 (at 174). See also Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity*, 95.

34 George Khodr, “An Orthodox Perspective on Inter-religious Dialogue,” in *Current Dialogue*, 19 (1991): 25-27 (at 25). See also George Khodr, “Christianity in a Pluralist World: The Economy of the Holy Spirit,” in Stanley J. Samartha, ed, *Living Faiths and*

Yong argues that the “Economies of the Spirit and the Son are related as two hands, yet distinct, so that pneumatological considerations could be autonomously foregrounded before engaging Christological norms.”<sup>35</sup> Yet Yong feels that McDermott and Netland misinterpret his prioritizing of Pneumatology over Christology on the basis of his “wanting Christians to discern sympathetically to other faiths as separating the Son from the Spirit.”<sup>36</sup>

Yong observes that McDermott and Netland are reluctant to think Pneumatology theologically about what might be beautiful and good in the human cultures of other faiths.<sup>37</sup> This echoes what I mentioned a combination of Yong’s anthropological and pneumatological approaches in reaction to Christians’ exclusive view of Christology. While I agree with Yong on his insistence on discerning the Spirit in other cultures as a positive Christian attitude, I wonder if the Son could also be present in human cultures as the incarnate Word (Jn. 1:14). While Yong finds Ireneaus’ analogy of two hands,<sup>38</sup> helpful for overcoming the subordination of the Spirit to the Son, he does not develop a Trinitarian concept of how the Spirit and Son should be seen as two hands. Rather he develops a one hand and says, “Pneumatological theology is a robustly Trinitarian theology. This is because Pneumatology completes and fills out the doctrine of Trinity.”<sup>39</sup> For Yong, Pneumatocentrism is Trinitarianism. This is what leads McDermott and Netland to react against Yong by proposing a fourfold Trinitarian criteria.<sup>40</sup>

(1) The indivision of the Trinity (three Persons in one God); (2) The indivision of the Son from the Spirit; (3) the indivision of the incarnate

*the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1971): 131-142 (esp. at 136-140).

35 Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 297. Yong, *Discerning the Spirit* (s), 57, 69.

36 Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 297.

37 *Ibid.*, 298.

38 Yong, *Discerning the Spirit* (s), 70. Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 43

39 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 20.

40 This does not mean that the main purpose of McDermott and Netland’s book is to react against Yong’s pneumatology. Rather their purpose is to propose an evangelical Trinitarian theology of religions.

Jesus (humanity) from the eternal Logos (divinity); (4) the indivision of the Father from the Son.<sup>41</sup>

The first criteria sees three Persons in one substance of divinity as the ground for the Trinity. They are indivisible from their eternity. “Just as the Father, the Son and the Spirit are interpersonally united, they are involved in one economic mission of salvation inseparably.”<sup>42</sup> Second there is an undivided relationship between the Son and the Spirit as two hands of the Father. Dividing the Son from the Spirit is betraying the dialectical tension of the universality and particularity of the Father. If Jesus represents the particularity of God, the Spirit represents the universal presence and activity of God. One needs to hold this tension. Third, one needs to hold the tension between the incarnate Jesus and the pre-incarnate Christ as fully human and fully divine. Dividing the incarnate Jesus from the pre-incarnate Christ has tendency toward equalizing Jesus with other religious teachers. Four, an undivided union between the sending Father and the sent Jesus by the Spirit is the ground for the mission of the sent church into the world.<sup>43</sup>

Having established this fourfold framework, McDermott and Netland propose some central themes of evangelical trinitarian theology of religions. They include revelation and religions, salvation and conversion, Christian life and moral teachings of other religions, religions and cultures and the ethics of Christian witness in a multireligious world.<sup>44</sup> First, in exploring the relationship between revelation and religions, they propose that Christians must use the Trinity in what Kairkkainen calls ‘its narrative fullness’<sup>45</sup> of the inseparable and non-hierarchical relationship

41 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 53-72. See also Yong, “Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions,” 295.

42 *Ibid.*, 53. Italics mine.

43 For a full account of interpretation of a trinitarian concept, see McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, especially pp. 53-72.

44 *Ibid.*, 86-294.

45 Veli-Matti Kairkkainen, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Trinitarian Faith,” in Sung Wook Chung, ed, *Christ the One and the Only: A Global Affirmation of the*

between the Son and the Spirit as the framework for Christians' witness to the salvation of Christ and the general revelation of the Spirit. Second, they propose an evangelical concept of the relationship between salvation and conversion. They argue that salvation and conversion should not be seen as synonyms, though the two are related. Salvation is a divine gift to everyone, but human's response to that gift with repentance is necessary for conversion.<sup>46</sup>

Third, they propose the moral convergences and theological divergences between Christianity and other faiths. Theologically, Christianity is divergent from Islam in the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, and from Buddhism in the doctrines of sin and God. But religions are morally convergent and so Christians should learn ethics from other religions for cultivating faith and for a common good of shalom.<sup>47</sup> Finally, they propose the Christ-patterned mission of incarnation as the Christian mission model of dialogical and apologetic witness to the truth, life and work of Christ in a multireligious world.<sup>48</sup> As non-Pentecostal Christians, McDermott and Netland's approach is too strong in Christology. What they missed is a twofold role of the Spirit in the incarnational and the crucified ministry of Christ and in the cross-cultural mission of the church.

## II. MCDERMOTT AND NETLAND'S PROPOSALS AND YONG'S REACTIONS AND ELABORATIONS

Yong's first reaction is that McDermott and Netland's approach is grounded in the traditional Chalcedonian fences. He feels that such approach with the emphasis on Christology is not relevant for a Trinitarian theology of religions.<sup>49</sup> Second, when considering general revelation and religions,

*Uniqueness of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005): 115-125.

46 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, especially pp. 53-72.

47 Ibid., 193-205. See also Gerald R. McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation and Religious Traditions* (Downer Groves, IL: IVP, 2000).

48 Ibid., 277-193.

49 Yong, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions," 295-296.

evangelicals often use *Logos spermatikos* as a way of seeing Jesus as the incarnated One who enlightens minds of people. According to Yong, what they missed is the role of the Spirit. He argues that “such Logos centric approach is binitarian rather than trinitarian.”<sup>50</sup> Third, Yong’s reaction comes from the ideas of salvation and conversion. He is dissatisfied with the traditional evangelical claim of Jesus as the only Savior without considering the role of the Spirit in the religious world.<sup>51</sup> For Yong, it is the Spirit who brings other faiths to Christ’s salvation.<sup>52</sup>

Yong thinks that Netland and McDermott are not Trinitarian enough due to their insufficient emphasis on the significance of Pneumatology for an evangelical theology of religions. In order to elaborate a more dynamic Trinitarian praxis of mission in a pluralistic world, Yong proposes a “more Pneumatologically informed Trinitarian theology of holistic Christian mission.”<sup>53</sup> Yong provides three Pneumatological theses.

Thesis I: the many tongues of Pentecost invite consideration of God’s redemptive work among and through not only the many languages, but also the many cultures and perhaps and even the many religions of the world.<sup>54</sup>

Thesis one takes its roots in Luke’s narrative of Pentecostalism (Acts 2) and envisions John’s eschatological vision of God’s redemption of people from many tribes (Rev. 5:9; 14:6; 21:22-26).<sup>55</sup> Yong sees the Pentecostal narrative as the ground<sup>56</sup> for endorsing the many tongues and cultures of world religions. He argues that Luke’s use of ‘all flesh’ (Acts

Ibid., 295.

50 Ibid., 296

51 Ibid., 296.

52 Ibid., 297.

53 Ibid., 294.

54 Ibid., 299.

55 Ibid., 299.

56 Amos Yong, “A P(new)matological Paradigm for Christian Mission,” in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 33, no. 2. (April 2005): 173-191 (at 176-181).

2:17) implies a universal application of Spirit-led mission.<sup>57</sup> What is most significant about Luke's narrative of Pentecostalism is the way the Spirit speaks to people in their native languages (Acts 2:8). Yong takes up this as a contextual paradigm for Christian witness of the Spirit in people's native terms, not in Christian terms.<sup>58</sup> Yong insists that we must find human commonalities and understand them in their own terms.<sup>59</sup>

Thesis 2: "The many tongues of Pentecost suggest many missional and evangelistic practices vis-à-vis those in other faiths."<sup>60</sup> Thesis 2 indicates the importance of missional and kerygmatic witness of the Good News of Christ shalomically in resistance to the principalities of the world. Yong adds the Pentecostal idea of orthopathy (missional feeling) to orthopraxis (missional practice) and orthodoxy (missional belief). For Yong, "the missional practice and belief must be attentive to the affective levels of interreligious engagement for a common goal of shalom."<sup>61</sup> I agree with Yong that a Trinitarian mission must be rooted in the threefold missional nature of 'orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy.' Yong is right when he criticizes McDermott and Netland for their division of orthodoxy and orthopraxy from orthopathy.<sup>62</sup> In line with Yong, I would further argue that the weakness of liberation theology is its reduction of methodology to orthodoxy and orthopraxy without embracing orthopathy. From the perspective of God's relationship with the world, orthopathy (compassion) is foundation for the other two. As John records, God so loved the world that He sent His Son to redeem the world by the power of the Spirit (Jn. 3:16). God's pathos precedes saving praxis. Yong does not develop the idea of orthopathy as being rooted in both the Spirit and Christ. Affectionate love is the motivating power of Jesus' economic

57 Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh: World Pentecostalism and the Reconstruction of Christian theology in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 4.3.3.

58 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 36.

59 Yong, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions," 298.

60 *Ibid.*, 300.

61 *Ibid.*, 302.

62 *Ibid.*, 298.

mission.

Thesis 3: “The many tongues of Pentecost encourage transformative spaces and pathways for Christian mission in a world of many faiths.”<sup>63</sup> Thesis 3 is grounded in Yong’s understanding of salvation as a transformative aspect of Spirit’s work. In reaction to Christ’s exclusive category of historic salvation, which involves the question of who will be saved, Yong emphasizes a dynamic process of salvation as transformation by the power of the Spirit. This means that the Spirit continues to transform the mind of Christians (Rom. 12:2) and call other faiths to Christ in their own cultures. Building on the work of the Spirit for mutual transformation of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10), Yong proposes that the goal of interreligious dialogue must be mutually transformed.<sup>64</sup>

### III. THEIR CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES WITH THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

McDermott, Netland and Yong have some convergences in their confession of God as Trinity. As evangelicals, they reject a pluralist concept of God as the ultimate reality or impersonal deity,<sup>65</sup> and see Him as a personal creator, redeemer and sustainer of the world. Their view of God as Trinity is grounded in the Bible and apostolic testimony (Gen1; Matt. 11:12; Jn. 10:30; 3:8; Acts 2).<sup>66</sup> This is their first strength in common. Second, they have convergent motivations in overcoming the impasse of a classic threefold typology of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.<sup>67</sup> They agree that this typology is misleading as it focuses on a narrow sense of soteriology, while neglecting other important missiological issues.<sup>68</sup> Yet

63 Ibid., 302.

64 Ibid., 203.

65 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 49. Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 27. Yong acknowledges that he is neither an exclusivist nor a pluralist.

66 Ibid., 49-52; Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 18, 32.

67 This threefold typology was first coined by Alan Race, see Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM, 1983).

68 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 13. See Yong, *Beyond*

they are divergent in their approaches to it.

For Yong, the Spirit and His healing presence in other religions as a way, while McDermott and Netland propose a renewed Trinity as a framework for broadening the concept of salvation.<sup>69</sup> They do not question who will be saved and who will not be. Such soteriological question is one of the weaknesses of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.<sup>70</sup> A soteriological question of who will be saved is God's business. Instead our Christian business is to witness to God's multidimensional salvation as the gospel of holistic transformation in word and work. While I appreciate Yong's proposal of Pneumatology as a way to overcoming a classic threefold typology, I am dissatisfied with his neglect of Christology instead of holding them as two hands of the Father in the historical and present drama of God's salvation and revelation. Another limitation is the failure to take seriously the role of the Spirit in the incarnational ministry of Christ. We may certainly emphasize the Pentecostal narrative in Acts 2, but we cannot ignore the Lukan Gospel's record of the role of the Spirit in the ministry of Christ (Lk. 4:18-19). The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is also possible by the power of the Spirit. In short, the Spirit and the Son are two hands of the Father mean that the whole ministry of Jesus—from the incarnation through the death and resurrection—is possible by the Spirit.

Third, they are convergent in the mission ethics of positive approaches to other faiths. Yet they are divergent in their emphases. Yong's positive approach to other faiths depends on the universal presence of the Spirit in other religions, while McDermott and Netland's positive approach to other faiths depends on God's general revelation without limiting God's special revelation in Christ.<sup>71</sup> The strength of Yong's approach is

*the Impasse*, 26-29. See also Amos Yong, "Can We Get Beyond the Paradigm? —A Response to Terry Muck's Proposal in Theology of Religions," in *Interpretation*, vol. 61, no. 1. (January 2007): 28-32.

69 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 122-181.

70 Yong, "Can We Get Beyond the Paradigm?", 29.

71 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 277.

discerning the Spirit in other religions and witnessing to the Spirit from the inside of their own cultures. Yong has another strength in seeing the Pentecostal narrative as a ground for endorsing the many cultures as God's gifts. This advances mission as both contextualization and globalizing in people's native tongues. McDermott and Netland do not question why we are culturally diverse. But three of them have another convergences in their view of God as a merciful Being who is interceding in healing the groaning world and is inviting us to join in His healing mission (Rom. 8:27).<sup>72</sup> This advances the scope of mission and the scope of salvation as healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice.

McDermott and Netland are more passionate than Yong about the evangelistic task of converting other faiths and are more apologetic on the question of religious truths as they believe that God calls us from the satanic influences of religions (2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-18).<sup>73</sup> For McDermott and Netland, the ultimate goal of interreligious dialogue is to convince other faiths. Adopting Karl Barth's concept of divine revelation as a dialectical act, they argue that God's revelation in Christ not only discloses His reconciling love, but it also exposes and transforms our religious idolatries.<sup>74</sup> Barth's concept of divine revelation and human religion is rooted in a German term *Ufhebung*. *Ufhebung* has dialectical meanings—negation and elevation.<sup>75</sup> Barth sees God's revelation as a dialectical act in a way that it not only discloses God's love and holiness, but it also exposes and negates our sinful and idolatrous nature of religion and elevates or transforms it into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Barth does not treat divine revelation to destroy and replace religion, but to

72 Yong, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions," 302.

73 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 254-255. See also Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 181-192, 335. See also Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 112-150.

74 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 228-229.

75 Garrett Green, *Karl Barth on Religion* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 13-27.

fulfill and transform it (Matt. 5:17).<sup>76</sup>

Yet there is a difference between Barth's dialectical concept of divine revelation and human religion and Netland and McDermott's interpretation of Barth's. While Barth's use of divine revelation as a negation and as an elevation of religion includes Christian religion itself because for Barth the category of 'religion' is a human seeking God and revelation is a divine seeking and transforming human religion,<sup>77</sup> Netland and McDermott see God's revelation as a way of exposing and exalting other religions only.

While Netland and McDermott tend to see more of negative values of other religions as satanic influence without forgetting to learn morality from other religions,<sup>78</sup> Yong's strength is to see more of good values of other religious cultures as the economic and holy spaces of the Spirit's presences and as the medias for God's Spiritual revelation.

Emphasizing the economic presence of the Spirit in other religious cultures, Yong's Pneumatology is economically strong and ontologically weak. His Pneumatology will be more trinitarian if he could explicitly develop the ontological role of the Spirit in the ministry of Christ and the Spiritual gifts of the church. What we cannot deny the fact is that Christ's incarnation is trinitarianly Spirit-anointed and Christ's resurrection is Spirit-empowered. Without the Spirit, the whole ministry of Christ is impossible.

I agree with Yong when he proposes Pneumatology as a ground for witnessing to the universal presence of the Spirit "in their terms without

76 For a critical reading of Barth's dialectical theology of divine revelation and human religion and his treatment of religion as faithlessness and Christianity as true religion, see my article David Thang Moe, "Karl Barth against Religion, not Religions: Constructing Barth's Dialectical Theology of Divine Revelation and Human Religion in Asia," in *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol. 31, no. 1. (April 2017): 113-140 (esp. at. 113-122).

77 Barth's concept of divine revelation is not without problem. It is 'not wrong, but too one-sided.' He focuses one-sidedly on how God objectively reveals to us without asking how humans might also have a subjective knowledge of God through cultures. In either way, God's revelation is always initiated by God who creates us. For my critique of Barth, see Moe, "Barth against Religion, not Religions," 122-126.

78 McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* 80-90.

our prejudgment.” But I am dissatisfied when he prioritizes Pneumatology over Christology on the basis of “Christological criteria for assessing other faiths as scandalous.”<sup>79</sup> In my view, such scandalous and exclusive attitude toward other faiths is not necessarily the problem of Christology. It is the problem of the church. Karkkainen is correct in saying that the idea of exclusivism is more related to the problem of ecclesiocentrism which either restricts the salvation of Christ to a redeemed community or imposes on the necessity of hearing the gospel through the proclamation of the church in Christian terms (Rom. 10:17),<sup>80</sup> without listening to the voices of other religions. If Karkkainen is correct, I would argue that it is not the church, but Christ and the Spirit who must judge and transform not only the exclusive attitudes of the church, but also the idolatrous practices of religions.

In short, Yong’s Trinitarianism is Pneumatocentric, while Netland and McDermott’s Trinitarianism is Christocentric. As a result, Yong’s Christology is trinitarianly weak,<sup>81</sup> whereas Netland and McDermott’s Pneumatology is trinitarianly weak. I will argue that a contemporary trinitarian theology of religions need new hermeneutics and methodologies of holding the relationship between the Son and Spirit within their single economy of God’s revelation in the world. If God is the triune Lord of the whole world, why are we to separate the incarnate Son who dwells in all human flesh (Jn. 1:14) from the poured-out Spirit who is at work in all people (Acts 2:17)? There must be a Trinitarian presence and work of the Spirit and the Son in other religions. Yong, McDermott and Netland do not explicitly explore how the relationship between the Son and Spirit could advance a Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology of religions.

79 Ibid., 298.

80 Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003). 342-345.

81 See Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 217.

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#### IV. RETHINKING A PERICHORETIC TRINITY FOR AN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

An evangelical Trinitarian theology of religions must see the Son and the Spirit as ‘two hands’ of God the Father.’ This is the thesis and proposal of my paper. On the other hand, I am fully aware of the challenge. The proposal of seeing the Son and the Spirit as two hands of the Father raises two critical and challenging questions. When seeing the Son and the Spirit as two hands of the Father: (1) are we not forgetting the Father? (2) How can two hands of the Son and the Spirit be Trinitarian (it seems like more of binitarian)?

In answer to these questions, I borrow Jürgen Moltmann’s trinitarian methodology of *perichoresis*.<sup>82</sup> Of course, Moltmann is not the first theologian who introduces the perichoretic concept of the Trinity. He acknowledges that the “Greek father Gregory of Nazianus was the first to use the word *perichoresis*, but John Damascus made it the key word for his Christology and then also for the doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>83</sup> However, it is fair to note that Moltmann is one of the pioneers who develop and popularize a perichoretic concept of the Trinity in a contemporary world. To say that *perichoresis* is not a new term, Moltmann calls it “an old magic word for a new Trinitarian theology.”<sup>84</sup> The Greek word, *perichoresis* means a movement of mutual abiding, mutual dancing, mutual rotation and mutual embracing one another.<sup>85</sup>

In Christology, *perichoresis* describes the mutual penetration of two natures of Christ without division. In the Trinity, *perichoresis* means the

82 Jürgen Moltmann, “God in the World –the World in God: *Perichoresis* in Trinity and Eschatology,” in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds, *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008): 369-381.

83 *Ibid.*, 373.

84 Jürgen Moltmann, “*Perichoresis*: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology,” in M. Douglas Meeks, ed, *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingwood Books, 2000): 111-126.

85 Moltmann, “God in he World—the World in God,” 372, 375.

mutual abiding of three different Persons of the Father, Son and the Spirit by “making the three-fold divine space for the indwelling of the other.”<sup>86</sup> I would add: in Pneumatology, *perichoresis* describes the mutual activity of the Spirit’s particular presence in the church and His universal presence in the world. In ecclesiology, *perichoresis* means a community of one faith with different gifts for a common ministry of the Trinity (1Cor. 12:1-13; Eph. 4:5-6). A perichoretic ecclesiology describes an ideal of a community without uniformity. *Perichoresis* describes the undivided community of the one divine *and* the three Persons without individualism (trinitarian monotheism) as well as the three *in* the one without the absolute subjectivism (tri-unity) (Jn. 14:10-11; 23).<sup>87</sup> According to *perichoresis*, it is impossible to divide the Father from the Son and the Spirit, and the Son from the Spirit.<sup>88</sup>

Since the perichoretic Trinity is a non-hierarchical and an undivided community of equals, we should not even number them and call the Father “the first person,” the Son “the second person” and the Holy Spirit “the third person”<sup>89</sup> in a quantitative sense. On account of this perichoretic unity and reciprocal movement, the Father is reciprocally in the Son, reciprocally in the Holy Spirit. No one of them supervenes in hierarchical power.<sup>90</sup> Building on this perichoretic framework, I will develop three themes.

### ***1. A Trinitarian Christology: The Son as a Supreme Revelation of God for All***

The idea of Trinitarian Christ as a normative revelation of God is developed by Barth. Barth’s famous remark on a Trinitarian revelation

86 Ibid., 375.

87 Ibid., 372-373.

88 Ibid.,

89 Ibid., 373.

90 Ibid.

is: “God makes Himself known to us through Himself.”<sup>91</sup> For Barth, the fundamental question is not how do we know God (epistemologically), but how does God make Himself known to us (ontologically). From this follows, he talks about a Trinitarian revelation of the Father as a “revealer, the Son as the revelation and the Spirit as revealedness.”<sup>92</sup> In light of this drama of a Trinitarian revelation, I see no room for Christonomism in Barth’s theology, though he subordinates the Spirit to the Son. I must agree with Yong on his critique of Barth for the latter (subordinating the Spirit to the Son), but I disagree with him for his former critique of Barth as a Christonomistic exclusivist.<sup>93</sup> Barth is one of the pioneers of the renewed Trinity<sup>94</sup> with the emphasis on a Trinitarian Christology. I am convinced by his proposal that we know God the Father (revealer) through the revelation of Christ by the power [revealedness] of the Spirit. Barth’s trinitarian Christology is grounded in the Johannine and Pauline theologies. John said, “it is the incarnated Son who makes His Father known to us” (Jn. 1:18). Jesus Himself said, “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Likewise, Paul said, “Jesus is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).<sup>95</sup> Pauline description of Jesus as the image of the invisible God means that God’s invisible being is known through the incarnated and crucified Christ by the power of the Spirit.

While agreeing with Barth on his proposal of a Trinitarian Christology, I propose to go beyond him by seeing a Trinitarian Spirit as an equal

91 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, I.I. trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), 296.

92 *Ibid.*, 295.

93 It is true that Barth prioritized Christ over Spirit, but he did not entirely neglect the Spirit. In his *Church Dogmatics* IV/3.II, he explicitly developed the role of the Spirit in the ministry of Christ and the ministry and hope of the church. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, IV.3.II, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), 681-942.

94 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 46.

95 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993). Moltmann’s interpretation of Pauline view of ‘Jesus as the image of the invisible God’ is worthy of mentioning. He said, “When the crucified Christ is called the image of the invisible God, the meaning is that this is God and God is like this,” 205.

partner to Christ in a Trinitarian revelation of the Father. To go beyond Barth's Trinitarian Christology means to propose the Trinitarian Spirit and the Trinitarian Son as being proceeded from the Father as His two hands for an economic plan of salvation (Jn. Jn. 15:26; 17:5-6).<sup>96</sup> Moltmann, probably the leader of post-Barthianism suggests that "We need to talk about the relationship of the Spirit to the Son so that we are able to interpret the Spirit as being the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9).<sup>97</sup> Later I will develop the concept of Trinitarian Pneumatology. At this point, let me spend a little more time on exploring how Jesus plays a vital role in a Trinitarian revelation. Influenced by Barth's Trinitarianism, McDermott, Netland and Kairkkainen argue that the "Trinity and Christology are interdependent."<sup>98</sup>

On account of the interdependence between the Trinity and Christology, we must affirm that Christ is the embodiment of God's special revelation. As an embodiment of the Father, Christ not only reveals the loving heart of the Father (Jn. 1:18), but He also fulfills the redeeming purpose of the Trinity (Jn. 3:16; 17:4-5).<sup>99</sup> It is through the incarnation of Christ by the power of the Spirit that God reconciles us to Himself (Jn. 12:32; 2Cor. 5:18). Timothy Tennent rightly argues for the "incarnation of Christ as a means through which sinful humanity gains access to the triune God."<sup>100</sup> It is equally important to note that the incarnation of Christ serves as a continuation of God's general revelation to all human cultures. The incarnation is the fulfillment of the Trinitarian process in creation. Colossians pronouns that in Christ, the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form (Col. 2:9). Since the Father, the Son and the Spirit are undividedly one in essence, so do they work mutually in one

96 See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 154, 181-182.

97 *Ibid.*, 181.

98 *Ibid.*, 83. See also Kairkkainen, "The Uniqueness of Christ" 123.

99 See Andreas J. Kostenberger, *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, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 107-111.

100 Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 190.

economic mission of creation (creation out of nothing: Gen. 1) and of new creation or redemption (creation out of the old: 2Cor. 5:17). God's trinitarian revelation in Christ not only reveals His divine nature of love, but also fulfills His economic plan of cosmic redemption (Col. 1:19-20). Moltmann rightly states;

We interpret salvation history as the history of the Son of God. We understand this history as the trinitarian history of God in concurrent and joint workings of the three subjects –the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and we interpret it as the history of God's trinitarian perichoretic relationships of fellowship.<sup>101</sup>

Since God's revelation in Christ is a Trinitarian movement, the Father is not simply sitting in heaven without being involved in the incarnation, death and resurrection of God. Within a perichoretic fellowship, the Father is actively involved in the ministry of Jesus by the power of the Spirit. Gavin D'Costa rightly proposes that "A Trinitarian Christology guards against an exclusivist particularism (Christonomism) and a pluralist universalism (Theocentrism) by dialectically relating the particularity and the universality of God."<sup>102</sup> Against an exclusive Christonomism, we must stress that the Father is known not only through the Son, but also through the Spirit.<sup>103</sup> Precisely because of this, I stress that the Father is known through the undivided two hands of the Son and the Spirit.

Against a pluralist theocentrism, we must also argue that we cannot speak of the Father without the incarnational story of the Son. The Father without the incarnate Son must be the absolute Other who does not enter the world. Since the triune God is a relational being, He enters the human world through the incarnation of Christ by the power of the Spirit. We know God's trinitarian nature of love and economic salvation through the story of Christ by the power of the Spirit. In this particular regard,

101 Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 156.

102 Gavin D'Costa, "Christ, the Trinity and Religious Diversity," in Gavin D'Costa, ed., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: Toward an Inclusive Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990): 16-29 (at 18).

103 *Ibid.*, 18.

the Son is normative in revelation of God.<sup>104</sup> McDermott and Netland are right to argue that we have a natural knowledge of God in creation (Rom. 1:19; Ps. 19:1), but our saving knowledge of God is possible through Christ.<sup>105</sup> His creation is a mediator of our natural knowledge of God, but such knowledge is not sufficient for salvation. Jesus is the only mediator for saving knowledge of God (1Tim. 2:5).<sup>106</sup> Likewise, Yong affirms that Jesus is the normative and final revelation, but not the *only* revelation of God.<sup>107</sup> God continually reveals Himself to us and other faiths. From this follows, Yong insists on the role of the Spirit in God general or natural revelation. This leads us to the next thesis.

## ***2. A Trinitarian Pneumatology: The Spirit as a Universal Presence in All Religions***

To claim that the Father, Son and Spirit are present in all religious cultures, I would like to propose a Trinitarian Pneumatology rather than a Pneumatocentric Trinity, which tends to prioritize the Spirit over the Father and the Son. I find D’Costa’s thesis of Pneumatology persuasive for developing a Trinitarian theology of religions. D’Costa argues that “Pneumatology enables the particularity of Christ to be related to the universal activity of the triune God in all cultures.”<sup>108</sup> While Jesus is the particular cause of salvation, the Spirit enables salvific activity to be effective cosmically in other faiths. Yong develops a pneumatological doctrine of salvation into three categories of “was saved, am being saved,” and will be saved.”<sup>109</sup> Salvation is to be defined as a dynamic process in which the Spirit plays a crucial role.<sup>110</sup> From the perspective

104 Ibid., 18.

105 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 91-94.

106 Ibid., 91-94.

107 Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*, 77.

108 D’Costa, “Christ, the Trinity and Religious Diversity,” 19.

109 Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 47.

110 Ibid., 87.

of the relationship between salvation and conversion, Yong criticizes McDermott and Netland for their failure to consider the dynamic role of the Spirit in God's saving work.<sup>111</sup> For Yong, the Spirit continues to play a role in saving work, which was inaugurated by Christ.

Going beyond McDermott and Netland who emphasize the historical salvation of Christ, Yong focuses on the Spirit's continued role in saving other faiths. For Yong, the salvation of other faiths is impossible without work of the Spirit. The universal presence of the Spirit implies that we not only witness to the salvation of Christ among other faiths, but we also prepare to be converted through a meeting with other faiths for a transformative and new knowledge of Christ. This is because the "Spirit is not only the sanctifier, but also the one who brings about the new birth itself" (Titus 3:5).<sup>112</sup> The idea of mutual conversion and salvation in an interreligious dialogue echoes the encounter between Peter and Cornelius by the power of the Spirit (Acts 10). Cornelius as a religious other was converted to Christ, whereas Peter experienced Christ in a transformative way and affirmed that "God shows no partiality," that is God loves everyone regardless of religions (Acts 10:23). In the context of Peter's experiential conversion in a new way, Yong argues that a "Humble interreligious dialogue can change us to become different kinds of Christians without necessarily practicing what the religious other practice."<sup>113</sup>

This has some key missiological implications for a Trinitarian pneumatology. First, we must recognize the impartial grace of God and the prevenient presence of the Spirit. Especially the prevenient presence of the Spirit affirms the idea that the Spirit is already at work among people of other faiths before we proclaim the gospel of salvation and engage with them. Second, since the Trinitarian Spirit and the Trinitarian Christ are at work preveniently among other faiths, our mission task is not to bring the foreign God to them, but to bring the gospel and find

111 *Ibid.*, 47. See also Yong, "Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions," 296.

112 *Ibid.*, 39.

113 Amos Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue: Does the Spirit Blow through the Middle Way?* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 250.

a triune God as creator and sustainer through their cultures.<sup>114</sup> Paul is a good example for this. Paul acknowledges the prevenient presence of God among other faiths as an “unknown God” (Acts 17:23). Third, because the Spirit and the incarnate Word are present in other faiths, we must recognize people’s cultures as the medias for the gospel of the triune God’s general revelation. In this particular regard, Yong is right in affirming that the Spirit as a cosmic Breath (Jn. 3:8) could certainly blow the gospel of Christ through the Middle Way of Buddhism.<sup>115</sup>

In short, evangelicals must hold a relationship between a Trinitarian Christology and a Trinitarian Pneumatology. If we know *who* God the Father is through the incarnate Son (Jn. 1:18; Col. 1:15); we know *where* God is through the Spirit who blows cosmically (Jn. 3:8). I warn against the danger of an exclusive Christonomism, which states that the Father is known *only* through the Son. I argue that the incarnation of Jesus is incomplete without the Spirit. The Son and the Spirit play a mutual role in a drama of trinitarian revelation and salvation. Thus, a perichoretic Trinitarianism must hold the two hands work of the Son and the Spirit for one mission of salvation and revelation. This sort of thinking makes a contextual implication for the Trinitarian mission of the church.

### ***3. A Trinitarian Ecclesiology: Christ-liked and Spirit-led Community***

While Yong’s pneumatological approach has a significant contribution to recognizing the universal work and presence of the Spirit among other faiths, I still question how can other faiths understand explicitly the Spirit’s presence and activity without the church? I will argue that the church plays a crucial role in making sense of the Spirit’s universal presence in people of other religions by listening to them with cultural

114 No missionaries bring God to other religions, rather they bring the gospel to them. See my article David Thang Moe, “Adoniram Judson: A Dialectical Missionary who Brought the Gospel (not God) and Gave the Bible to the Burmese,” in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 45, no. 3. (July 2017): 265-282.

115 Yong, *Pneumatology and the Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*, 249-255.

sensitivity. But this does not mean I am proposing to see the church as the third hand of the Trinity. Rather I am proposing to see the church as the Christ-liked and Spirit-led embodiment of the Trinity in terms of its apostolic witness to what the two hands have done and are doing in an intra-religious community of faith and in an inter-religious community of faiths. When it comes to the Trinity, we focus only on the significance of the economic Trinity for the sent or the scattered mission of the church (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8). While this is missiologically right, what is missing is the significance of the immanent Trinity. I suggest that we should re-consider the equal importance of the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity for the gathered and the scattered mission of the church.

First, the church is not just the agent of the Trinity to witness an economic plan of salvation; the church is what Miroslav Volf calls “the image of the Trinity.”<sup>116</sup> Volf’s proposal focuses on a Christian inner communion without rejecting its external communion with the world. Volf argues that as “three Persons in one divinity exist so perichoretically with, for and in one another by the power of love, also is the church as a community of one faith with different gifts (1Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:1-5) to be communal by the power of love.”<sup>117</sup> Evangelicals have a high view of the evangelistic commission and personal conversion,<sup>118</sup> yet they have a low view of the church’s inner communion or unity (Jn. 17:21). Evangelicals must take the Trinitarian nature of threefold Personal differences and their communion as the model for a Christian communion of one faith with different gifts. In order to demonstrate a perichoretic relationship between a Trinitarian life of communion and the church as a community, we need to develop what I call a ‘communitarian Trinity.’ I find a communitarian Trinity relevant for Asian Christians whose cultures are grounded in the communal practices of social relationality.

Second, evangelicals must recognize religio-cultural diversity as

116 Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

117 *Ibid.*, 210.,

118 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 160.

‘God’s gift to the world.’ I propose that a Trinitarian theology of religions provides two central methodological themes: the different characteristics of the Trinity in one Godhead and their external and humble relationship with the world through Christ by the Spirit. If the former recognizes the diversities of human cultures and religions, the latter provides Christians with the trinitarian mission model of the right hermeneutics of the religious other and the right approaches to their religio-cultural otherness. I argue that the right hermeneutics of the religious other precedes the right approaches to their otherness.<sup>119</sup>

I concur with Kevin Vanhoozer when he observes that the other is a hermeneutical problem in a pluralistic world and suggests the right hermeneutics of the identity of the Trinity serves as the Christian’s right view of the self and the other. He argues a proper focus on both the One and Three (one God with three Persons) provides the model for addressing the oneness of humanity with cultural otherness.<sup>120</sup> Humans with otherness have the same root in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Our common relationality (not relativism) of human race is rooted in God (Acts 17:26-28). I am not talking about a pluralistic concept of religious relativism that sees all religions as different pointers to the same ultimate reality. This kind of relativism rejects the uniqueness of Christ and equalizes Christ with other religious teachers. By contrast, I am talking about an anthropos relationality, which is grounded in the image of God. This is because a relational hermeneutics of the religious other as God’s image precedes our right approaches to their otherness. In other words, the right approaches to other religions depend on our right hermeneutics of the religious other as the image of God.<sup>121</sup>

119 For full account of discussion on these issues, see my forthcoming article David Thang Moe, “Identity and Otherness: A Trinitarian Theological Exploration of Engaging the Other and Embracing the Otherness in a Pluralistic World,” in *Ecclesiology: The Journal for Ministry, Mission and Unity*, vol. 14, no. 3. (October 2018).

120 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions? One Angling in the Rubicon and the Identity of God,” in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed, *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997): 41-71

121 For full account of discussion on these issues, see my forthcoming Moe, “Identity

Third, I suggest that the ‘kenotic Christ’ is the model for Christians’ right approaches to other faiths who are the image of God.<sup>122</sup> Kenosis has several meanings. For some, kenotic Christ means Christ’s becoming human by giving up divine attributes. I do not follow this. In this paper, I see kenosis as “exemplary humiliation of Christ”<sup>123</sup> (Phil. 2:6-11) without ceasing to be divine. It is rooted in two dimensions of the cross: *self-giving love*, which overcomes the hostility of God and the world (Eph. 2:13-22), and *other-receiving love*, which invites the other to come in.<sup>124</sup> The kenotic model of Christ’s mission must be operated in these two movements of reaching out to the religious other in love and inviting the other in our hospitable community with a generous open heart. In the context of these two movements, Yong encourages us to see Jesus both as the model of the welcoming host of God’s hospitality and as the model guest of people’s hospitality (Lk. 9:58).<sup>125</sup> In reaching out to the other, we become the guests in their strange cultures and crossing and learning their new cultures are imperative. Lalsangkima Pachuau rightly suggests: “We must cross, not crush peoples’ cultural boundaries.”<sup>126</sup> Likewise, Kosuke Koyama suggests that our approaches to other faiths must be operated by the *crucified mind* (Phil. 2:5), not by the *crusading mind* against others.<sup>127</sup> Engaging the religious other in love and embracing their otherness in and Otherness.”

122 For a good discussion of kenosis as a model of interreligious dialogue, see Martha Th. Frederiks, “Kenosis as a Model of Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 33, no. 2. (April 2005): 211-222.

123 Hans Kung, “God’s Self-Reduction and Buddhist Emptiness,” in Roger Corless and Paul F. Knitter, eds, *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity: Essays and Explorations* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990): 26-43 (at 32-34).

124 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 125-126.

125 Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*, 101-103.

126 Lalsangkima Pachuau, “Engaging the Other in a Pluralistic World: Toward a Subaltern Hermeneutics of Christian Mission,” in *Studies in World Christianity*, vol. 8, no. 1. (2002): 63-80 (at 73).

127 Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980). 54. For a contemporary implication of Koyama’s missiology of the crucified mind, see also my essay David Thang Moe, “The Crucified Mind: Kosuke Koyama’s Missiology of Theology of the Cross,” in *Exchange. Journal of Contemporary Christianities in Context*, vol. 46, no. 1. (2017): 5-28.

respect are the ethics of kenotic mission.<sup>128</sup>

In inviting other faiths, we become the hosts (Lk. 14:15-24). Making a hospitable space for the other [guests] is needed. As we gather at a hospitable space, “We share different stories of sorrows for mutual healing and different resources for mutual nourishment.”<sup>129</sup> A kenotic mission of hospitality demands the practice of giving and receiving. “We must see other faiths not as the mere objects for conversion, but as neighbors to whom giving and receiving must be extended for mutual conversion.”<sup>130</sup> As Jesus reaches out to us in love without destroying our human identities, but by becoming human and dwelling among us (Jn. 1:14), so does the Spirit reach out to people and speak to them in their native language (Acts 2:8) on the Day of Pentecost. I would argue that the undivided relationship between the Son and the Spirit’s kenotic and incarnational embrace of people of other faiths implies at least three goals of an interreligious dialogue.

First, evangelicals must see mission as “transmitting faith and translating the gospel.”<sup>131</sup> While McDermott and Netland focus on the former on the basis that other faiths are living in a satanic influence (2Cor. 4:4),<sup>132</sup> Yong focuses on the latter because the Spirit speaks to people in their own term.<sup>133</sup> Yong is right in seeing Pentecostal narrative as the model for translating the gospel, but we cannot neglect the incarnation narrative of Christ as a companion to the Pentecostal narrative for translating the gospel. Two champions in the study of world Christianity, Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls argue that Christianity is a translatable religion in all cultures.<sup>134</sup> Yet they are divergent in their methodological emphases

128 Frederiks, “Kenosis as a Model of Interreligious Dialogue,” 211.

129 Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Garden City, Doubleday, 1971), 89-96.

130 Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*, see the back cover.

131 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-78

132 Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 335.

133 Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*, 56.

134 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 219-220.

despite their common goals. Like Yong, Sanneh sees the Spirit's speaking to people in their native language (Acts 2:8) as the model for his view of Christianity as a locally and globally translatable religion and he believes that the success of Christianity as a non-western religion depends more on the reception of the locals in their language,<sup>135</sup> whereas Walls sees the incarnation of Christ (Jn. 1:14) as the ground for his view of Christianity as a locally and globally translatable religion.

For Walls, "translating the gospel and Christianity is deeply rooted in Jesus' translation of divinity into humanity."<sup>136</sup> The goal of interreligious dialogue is not simply to transmit Christian faith into other faiths (evangelism),<sup>137</sup> but to adopt their religious terms for translation of the gospel by adapting to their indigenous cultures (inculturation). A twofold idea of evangelism and inculturation is evident in Paul's mission practice. In his cross-cultural mission and evangelism among the Athenians, Paul calls Athenians to Christ by a dialectical way of "corrective and constructive dialogue"<sup>138</sup> (Acts 17:31-34) and uses their worldview as the locus for his writings. Paul was dialectically impressed with the Athenians' religious practices by saying "you are religious" (Acts 17:22) and was distressed by their idolatrous practices (17:16). On the basis of his dialectical approach to them, Paul called the religious Athenians by correcting what is unpleasing to God (17:23-24) and adopted their Greek terms for constructing his theological writings.

If Paul's cross-cultural mission of proclaiming the gospel of God's providence, hidden presence and resurrection from the inside of the Athenian cultures, Christians are to interact with and learn from the religious other in the process of transmitting faith and translating the

135 Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, revised and expanded (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 53-55, 33-42.

136 Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 27. While I agree with Walls' notion of Jesus' translation of divinity into humanity, I must also note that it does not mean that Jesus is transformed into humanity by giving up His divinity.

137 *Ibid.*, 334-335.

138 Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downer Groves, IL: IVP, 2005), 77

gospel. As we interact with the religious other, we must affirm that we do not bring the gospel as the judging *liberator* of cultures, but rather as the joyful news of humble *prisoner*.<sup>139</sup> To liberate or appropriate local cultures is not our work. Our work is to witness to the convenient presence of the trinitarian Spirit who would liberate cultures through the locals. I find Kwame Bediako's insights helpful for a Trinitarian missiology.

According to Bediako, there are three movements of Trinitarian mission. First, it is the triune God who takes the initiative of His incarnational mission through the pre-Christian cultures. The second is the missionary cross-cultural movement of transmitting faith and translating the gospel of Christ through the local cultures by the Spirit. The third is the converted Christians' 'indigenous assimilation' of the gospel and liberating their cultures.<sup>140</sup> Since the triune God is already active in the pre-Christian cultures, both the missionaries (the gospel bringers) and the converted local Christians (the gospel receivers) are called to participate in joining a trinitarian mission of God. In short, local religious terms and symbols play a crucial role in translating the gospel and localizing Christianity in the age of world Christianity. I observe that many theologians of religions do not pay a serious attention to this issue, whereas anthropologists do. However, the challenge we have in Asia is: what should we do when the local or majority religious groups ban us from using their religious terms? Muslims in Malaysia ban Christians from using *Allah* for expressing God<sup>141</sup> and some Buddhists in Myanmar ban Christians from using some of their religious terms for expressing the certain Christian categories.<sup>142</sup>

Second, the goal of an interreligious dialogue is cultivating faith for a

139 Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 3-15

140 Quoted in Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 70. See Kwame Bediako, *Christianity and Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 121.

141 <https://www.cnn.com/2014/06/24/world/asia/malaysia-allah-ban/index.html> (accessed on April 14, 2018).

142 <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/mahana-statement-04142018084216.html> (accessed on April 14, 2018).

deeper and thicker knowledge of God. Some evangelicals misunderstand God's special revelation in Christ as a basis for a full knowledge of God. Paul reminds us that we all have a "partial knowledge of God" (1Cor. 13:9) and every human has a moral knowledge of God (Rom. 2:14-15). For instance, Buddhists could have an implicit and general knowledge of the moral attributes of God through their eightfold path of a threefold principle (morality, wisdom and meditation), though they do not have an explicit and a saving knowledge of Christ. If so, Christians can learn about the moral attributes of God as justice and compassion from Buddhists. If Jesus' command to love the enemy is the model (Matt. 5:44), Christians can learn about the spiritual practice of forgiveness from a Buddhist social and spiritual activist Aung San Suu Kyi who forgives her enemies – the Burmese regimes—who put her in jail and under house arrest for 15 years. McDermott and Netland rightly say that Christians can learn about the act of forgiveness from Dalai Lama who forgives the Chinese communists who kill his fellow Tibetans.<sup>143</sup>

If religious terms and symbols play a crucial role in translating the gospel and localizing Christianity, the religious morality and spiritual practice play a crucial role in cultivating Christian faith as a transformative knowledge of God.<sup>144</sup> Since Christians are called to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29), our apostolic faith must be cultivated and liberated morally by the ethical teaching of the Bible (2Tim. 3:16-17) and by learning the ethical practices of the religious other through whom the Spirit may speak to us.<sup>145</sup> McDermott argues that three great Christian thinkers learned about God from other religious traditions. Saint Augustine learned from Neo-Platonism to better understand the gospel, Thomas Aquinas learned from Aristotle to better understand the Scriptures, John Calvin learned from Renaissance humanism to better comprehend the nature of God's revelation.<sup>146</sup> If these great Christian

143 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 130.

144 Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 311-312.

145 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 105-108.

146 See McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions?* 121-132.

leaders learned from other religious traditions, we should also learn from other religions for a thicker understanding of the triune God.

Third, Christians must see mission as transforming cultures (cultural change) and society (social change). When other faiths are converted to Christ, they would transform their cultures from within their own cultures. I have said earlier that this is the third movement of the trinitarian mission of the church. “Our missionary task is simply to introduce them to Christ and the gospel of His salvation.”<sup>147</sup> McDermott and Netland helpfully introduce multidimensional images of salvation as healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, justice, peace and shalom.<sup>148</sup> What is significant about their approach is the missiological connection between salvation and the Kingdom of the triune God. This allows us to see salvation not just in an individualistic term, but also in a holistic and broader term so that we work together with other faiths (*mission with other faiths*) for a common good of social and eco-justice and peace without ceasing to evangelize them (*mission to other faiths*).<sup>149</sup> In the Christian and Buddhist dialogue, I suggest that we should see suffering as a point of contact for discerning the Spirit’s intercession in a groaning world (Rom. 8:28) and for transforming the world.<sup>150</sup> In this regard, our interreligious goal is not for mutual agreement on the divergent concepts of God and the problem of evil, but for mutual goal of social justice and peace against evils that cause socio-political suffering on the convergent concepts of justice and compassion.

Mission is not just about proclaiming the gospel of salvation in word; mission is also about embodying Jesus’ transforming life and witnessing to the Spirit’s healing providence of the groaning creation in work. Precisely because of this, I must stress that the trinitarian mission practice of the

147 Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2009), 90.

148 McDermott and Netland, *Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 122-181.

149 Ibid., 126. The italic words in the parenthesis are mine.

150 See David Thang Moe, *Pyithu-Dukkha Theology: A Paradigm for Doing Dialectical Theology of Divine Suffering and Human Suffering in the Asian-Burmese Context* (Lexington, KY: Emeth, 2017).

church must be shaped by Christ and led by the Spirit. If we divorce one from the other, we cannot truly participate in the mission of the Trinity. Lesslie Newbigin rightly reminds us that “The mission of Jesus is not only to proclaim the Kingdom of the Father, but to embody the presence of the Kingdom in His person”<sup>151</sup> by the power of the Spirit. I am convinced by Newbigin’s Trinitarian concept of mission as “Proclaiming the kingdom of the Father (faith-centered), sharing the life of the Son (love-centered), and bearing the witness of the Spirit” (discernment-centered).<sup>152</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I am grateful to Yong, Netland and McDermott for proposing their innovative methodologies and contextual hermeneutics of a trinitarian theology of religions, but their proposals are not to be understood as the points of arrival for a normative theology of religions. Rather theirs are to be seen as the points of departure for developing a more robust Trinitarian theology of religions. To that goal, I have engaged with Yong, Netland and McDermott and have explored their different methodologies and have examined their strengths and limitations. McDermott and Netland approach to an evangelical Trinitarian theology of religions through the lens of Christ and His work of salvation, while Yong attempts to go beyond the Christological impasse and proposes a Pneumatological methodology as a better and a more inclusive way in a pluralistic world.

This paper does not take a stand with either side, instead this paper takes a middle ground by holding the Son and the Spirit as two hands of the Father within their single economy of salvation and revelation. I have proposed a perichoretic approach as a better way to foster a robust Trinitarian theology of religions in a pluralistic world. A perichoretic approach reconciles Netland and McDermott’s Christocentric Trinity,

151 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 40.

152 *Ibid.*, 30-65.

and Yong's Pneumatocentric Trinity by introducing a new perspective on a 'Trinitarian Christology' and a 'Trinitarian Pneumatology' without prioritizing one over the other. It expands their ideas from a perspective that foregrounds two hands work of the Spirit and the Son within a single economic plan of salvation for the glory of the Father (Jn. 17:4).

Moreover, a perichoretic way of re-thinking the Trinity shapes the identity of the church as a trinitarian community of love and faith and by extension the witness of salvation as a relational and transformative aspect of life in communion with other faiths for the glory of the Trinity. When Jesus came into the world by the power of the Spirit, He not only redeemed the world, but He also glorified the Father (Jn. 17:5). When Jesus ascended into heaven, the triune God—three Persons —equally receive glory from the church whose doxological and apostolic life is shaped by Christ and led by the Spirit (17:6-11).<sup>153</sup> Thus, we should not separate the work of Christ from the work of the Spirit.

It is true that Pneumatology has long been neglected or marginalized at the expense of overemphasizing Christology. Time has come to re-emphasize the Spirit and the Son as two hands of the Father. I have argued that without the Spirit, the incarnational mission of Christ is incomplete and the ongoing ministry of the church is impossible. It is equally important to note that without the incarnation of Christ we cannot know the Father (Jn. 1:18; 14:7) or the Father will remain as an absolute Other, withdrawing from the created world and the ongoing ministry of the church will be blind. Therefore, it is my proposal that instead of treating Christocentrism (Son), Pneumatocentrism (Spirit) and Theocentrism (Father) as three separate disciples for a divergent theology of religions, we should develop a perichoretic Trinitarian theology of religions that is grounded in the immanent communion and the economic act of the Trinity for the church and the world.

153 Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 152-153.

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# A Pastoral-Theological Assessment of the Conflict Between Atheistic Evolution, Creationism, and Scripture

**Stephen M. Vantassel**

KEYWORDS:

| Biblical Hermeneutics | Creationism |  
| Darwinian Evolution | Pastoral Theology |

ABSTRACT:

Atheistic evolution and creationism have been in conflict since Darwin's work in the 1800s. This paper reviews the fundamental concepts and assumptions underlying both positions and discusses how faithful Christians should frame the controversy. Suggestions for how pastors should handle the controversy in their respective churches is also provided.

## INTRODUCTION

The conflict between evolution and biblical creationism has raged ever since Darwin's landmark work in 1859. Some Christians, in their zeal for their interpretation of Genesis, have scorned believers who adopted a different view. This infighting has often lacked Christian charity and caused further fracturing of the church's unity.

In light of this debate, it is proper to reassess the evidence in the hopes of finding a suitable Christian stance that will hopefully soften Christian-versus-Christian fighting while not papering over legitimate differences. This article will offer some guidance on framing the debate by showing where scriptural teaching is clear (and less clear) and how it relates to Darwinian evolution. It is hoped that a better understanding of the facts, as presently understood, will help Christians have a more fruitful dialogue with those who disagree with their particular view of creation, while still being faithful to Scripture.

## HISTORIC CHURCH TEACHING ON CREATION PRIOR TO DARWIN

In light of our goal, it is appropriate to summarize some of the reasons behind the present creation debate. Church doctrine focused on the meaning of the classical text on creation, Genesis 1-2. Historically, the church recognized that the narrative was a remarkably matter-of-fact account of the universe's beginnings, especially when compared to the creation stories from contemporaneous nations.<sup>1</sup> Readers will search in vain for the rivalries rampant in the polytheistic cosmogonies.<sup>2</sup> *Elohim* is neither in conflict with other gods nor is he saddled with the limitations of materials needed for his creative act.<sup>3</sup> In short, God creates the form and

1 See, E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. ed., vol. 1, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 10; P.J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis: A Case for Literary Unity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers 1985). for details and discussion on extrabiblical parallels to the creation account.

2 Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942, 1951), 18. See also Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 30-36.

3 Despite Simkins assertion that biblical scholars have overstated the differences between biblical and non-biblical creation stories, he failed to provide sufficient evidence to counter the view that Moses demythologized the creation accounts of Israel's pagan neighbors. Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator & Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, 2003), 82-88.

substance of his desire.

Claims by those asserting that Genesis 1:1 must be understood as a dependent clause meaning “when God began to create...” and not as an independent clause meaning “in the beginning God created...” have not stood up to closer scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Von Rad contends that verse 1 is consistent with an *ex nihilo* creation and presents several reasons for this assertion. First, verse 1 clearly begins with God and God alone. Second, the uniqueness of the verb *bara*, “create,” exclusively refers to God’s activity. Third, there is the simple fact that verse 1 occurs before the chaos mentioned in verse 2. Fourth, the writer of Genesis had to use pagan terms in order to find words to characterize the initial chaos. Finally, the concept of chaos is necessary in order to underscore that creation remains orderly by the power of God.<sup>5</sup> Copan and Craig add other supporting arguments, including the notion that temporal clauses which lack the definite article can act as absolute clauses (e.g. Isa 40:21; 41:4; and 46:10). Their list continues to cite many more reasons.<sup>6</sup> However, for the purpose of this survey, it is enough to simply say that nothing in Genesis 1:1 militates against the New Testament’s interpretation that God created the universe from nothing.<sup>7</sup>

Scripture claims that the universe, i.e. everything that exists outside of God, was made by God.<sup>8</sup> God was not constrained by matter when he created the universe. God created the universe *ex nihilo* (from nothing), not *ex materia* (from pre-existent matter/energy/substance). It

4 Every modern and technical commentary will provide an extended discussion of the question. Much of the material that follows comes from the work of Copan and Craig, *Creation out of Nothing*, 29ff. See also Johnson T.K. Lim, “Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 16, no. 2 (October, 2002 2002): 301-314), who came to a similar conclusion several years earlier.

5 Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks, Rev. ed. ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 48-51.

6 Copan and Craig, *Creation out of Nothing*, 39ff.

7 It bears mentioning that the LXX, a pre-Christian document, also understands Genesis 1:1 as an independent clause.

8 Scripture affirms this truth across all genres. See Genesis 1; Psalms 115:15; 121:2; Job 38; Isaiah 37:16; Mark 13:39; Acts 7:50; Colossians 1:16; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1-5. This listing is by no means complete.

is critical for the reader to understand that the term “nothing” is not to be understood as referring to something that exists. In layman’s terms, nothing is nothing. Nothing is absence of existence. When the term *ex nihilo* is used in relationship to God’s creative act, it means that God was not constrained by anything except his good pleasure. In contrast, an artist is constrained by the medium of his materials, such as paint, canvas, and technical ability. Several key passages tell us that God was subject to no such constraints.

John’s gospel could not be more emphatic (John 1:3). John, endeavoring to substantiate the deity and co-equal nature of the Logos and the Father, echoes themes found in Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 44:24. He clearly states that all things, *ta panta*, were made by the Logos. Lest we misunderstand, he makes the claim in both positive and negative terms. Interpreters cannot dismiss the *ex nihilo* implications by arguing that matter is not a thing or that matter was pre-existent. John 1:1 excludes the pre-existence of everything except God. Had he wished to suggest that matter was pre-existent, all John had to do was to add “earth” or some other natural noun in the series that was with God. In this context *ta panta* essentially stands place for kosmos and thereby means the universe, the sum total of all created things.<sup>9</sup>

Other passages add weight to the conclusion that Scripture teaches the universe is a created thing, and one created by God from nothing. Hebrews 11:3 says that God brought forth the visible world from that which was unseen. Some may argue that the term “unseen” refers to Platonic forms. But Copan and Craig present convincing evidence that the phrase “that which is unseen” more likely means either “from nothing, i.e. *ex nihilo*” or “the power of God’s Word.”<sup>10</sup> Although favoring the latter understanding on contextual grounds (note the role the term “word” plays in the book of Hebrews), they point out that all possible understandings are compatible

9 Joachim Guhrt, “Kosmos,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1975, 1986), 1:524.

10 Copan and Craig., *Creation out of Nothing*, 79-80.

with an *ex nihilo* understanding of God's creative act.

Scripture also teaches that God purposefully ordered creation to be fit for mankind (Gen. 1-2; Ps. 8). Creation was designed and goal-oriented to fulfill God's will before the foundation of the world. Christ says that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). In making this claim, he ties together not only the Mosaic law but also hearkens back to God's purpose for creation (Ex. 20:8-11). Paul also speaks to the purposefulness of God in that he chose the redeemed before creating the world (Eph. 1:4).<sup>11</sup> The animal and plant kingdoms are never spoken of as needing salvation from sin. Only the effects of the curse are seen as afflicting them (Rom. 8:22).

In the western world (including the Islamic world<sup>12</sup>), this view of the universe and mankind's place in it was essentially unquestioned. The Westminster Larger Catechism of 1648<sup>13</sup> exemplifies how Christianity viewed creation prior to Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. It says, in its familiar question and answer format:

**Question 15: What is the work of creation?**

Answer: The work of creation is that wherein God did in the beginning, by the word of his power, make of nothing the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good. . . .

**Question 17: How did God create man?**

Answer: After God had made all other creatures, he created man male and female; formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man, endued them with living, reasonable,

11 Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, vol. 1, 2 vols., *Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 79, 104. Although Barth understands "foundation" as a biological term, the point is that God knew his children before he "sowed the seed" of the earth.

12 See 7:54 & 41:9-10 in *The Prophet Mohammed, The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary* trans. Maulana Muhammad Ali, Second Revised ed. (Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyyah anjuman Isha'at Isam Lahore, Inc, 1951, 1996).

13 Westminster Divines, "Westminster Larger Catechism," Church of Scotland, accessed July 12, 2005. [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc\\_w\\_proofs/index.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wlc_w_proofs/index.html). The author used a version that lacked the Scripture proofs as found at the URL above.

and immortal souls; made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.

**Question 18: What are God's works of providence?**

Answer: God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.

In sum, the church believed that God created heaven and earth in the manner described in Genesis and other passages. It also held that God created with purpose and with a goal and not by happenstance. Additionally, it was decidedly dualistic in that the church believed in the existence of matter *and* spirit.

## THE CHALLENGE OF DARWINIAN EVOLUTION<sup>14</sup>

The status quo came to an abrupt end upon the publication of Darwin's *Origins of the Species* in 1859. It would be no understatement to say that the text rocked the intellectual world and stood the standard understanding of the way things were on its head. Christianity's intellectual dominance, or more broadly theism's intellectual dominance, which had eliminated polytheistic views of creation along with other mythologies, now faced an ideology that did not require supernatural or intelligent oversight to account for the world's existence. Although Darwin's views were much more modest,<sup>15</sup> his boosters quickly took hold of his teaching and used it

14 The author recognizes that evolution has multiple meanings. For the purposes of this paper, evolution is being used to refer to the origins of life without the need or existence of a creator or designer. This I have termed atheistic evolution and/or Darwinian evolution. The author understands that some believe that God used/guided evolutionary processes as the means to create the universe as we know it. This paper seeks to avoid that issue and deal with atheistic or Darwinian evolution.

15 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground*

to reject the notion of a God-ordained creation.

Today, evolution has been co-opted by a worldview known as scientific naturalism. Scientific naturalism asserts that all reality consists of only one substance (matter-energy).<sup>16</sup> If matter/energy is all there is, it comes as no surprise that every event must have a natural (vs. a supernatural) cause.<sup>17</sup> Adherents believe that the universe and our present world occurred through known, or eventually to be discovered, natural processes. Richard Dawkins, an atheist and also self-anointed evangelist for atheistic evolution from the University of Oxford, explains how evolution can properly account for the world as it now stands. He contends that while the diversity and complexity of the organisms around us are fascinating, they resulted from the forces of natural selection working on materials organized by blind chance.<sup>18</sup> Dennett describes Darwin's theory by contrasting Locke's philosophy with Darwin's. As Locke believed that matter needed the oversight of a mind to become organized, Darwin asserted that matter organized itself and then created mind.<sup>19</sup> Dennett's support of Darwinism makes sense given his belief that all of reality is basically matter/energy, which is just organized in different ways. Dawkins sounds a similar chord, noting that while the world around us is complex, the complexity is due to natural causes, including random mutations, and not to a conscious designer.<sup>20</sup> Given enough time, Dawkins believes that natural forces are sufficient to explain how the world (and all

*between God and Evolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999, 2002), 289-292.

16 The author is aware that Einstein's equation  $E=mc^2$  highlights the interchangeable relationship between matter and energy.

17 Arthur Peacocke, "Biology and a Theology of Evolution," *Zygon* 34, no. 4 (December 1999), 698-9; and William Lane Craig, "Part 3: Christ and Miracles," in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith and et. al. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 140f.

18 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design*, with a New Introduction (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1996), 43. Dawkins says that simple items (i.e. non-living) were created by chance but that complex items arose through natural selection.

19 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995), Chapter 1.

20 Richard Dawkins., *The Blind Watchmaker*, 5.

its complexity) as we know it came to be.

Evolution, understood in an atheistic manner, presents us with a number of troubling ideas. First, evolution denies humanity's uniqueness by asserting that just like all the other organisms, humans are just the result of random mutations<sup>21</sup> which were able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by natural selection.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, evolution's reductionism eliminates any room for freedom and ultimate morality.<sup>23</sup> God, good, and evil were simply figments of a primitive imagination. In short, evolution claimed to be the truth, and with this truth its adherents engaged in evangelism. Evolution's believers were not satisfied to remain in their laboratories and research facilities. Instead, they undertook a crusade to liberate humanity from its superstitions of religion, God, miracles, and fear of the unknown.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, evolution presents itself as a direct competitor to Christianity's explanation of the world's origin.<sup>25</sup>

The ideological threat that Darwinian evolution presented—and continues to have—to Christianity is obvious. Evolution undercuts several major Christian doctrines, including the existence of God, objective morality, the preeminence of mankind,<sup>26</sup> and purposefulness of life. Evolution accomplishes this task by simply presenting another “story” or account for our origins backed by “science.” Using science and

21 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 50.

22 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 168.

23 The author understands that there is diversity of opinion about evolution and its relationship to religion. However, he believes that looking at the extreme positions provides a better foil to evaluate the issue. For another opinion on evolution see Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 203f. Miller, an evolution supporter, uses Quantum Theory to reject hard determinism. Unfortunately, his answer leads to a God who is not really in control (see pp. 204, 234, 289.). He also adopts a materialistic view of humanity (pp. 290-1). Contra Daniel C. Dennett., *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 467ff.

24 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 165ff. Miller has an excellent discussion on reasons for the hostility between science and religion.

25 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 37. Miller says, “Evolution is history.”

26 Richard Dawkins., *The Blind Watchmaker*, x. Dawkins rejects the notion that the universe is evolving to a higher goal or that man was the destiny of evolution. With the mind as little more than a computer program, one wonders what the point of existence is in the first place. One suspects that Dawkins would consider this question nonsensical, in the same way a theist would if asked to think about life without God.

reason, evolutionists seek to quarantine Christian beliefs in the land of fanciful stories of Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy.<sup>27</sup> The clash between Christianity and evolution is nothing less than the struggle for the mind of contemporary man. If Christianity loses the battle, then it will be reduced to mythological status with little more value than the pragmatic “higher power” belief of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Since evolution engenders so many challenges to the traditional doctrine of creation, it is difficult to know where to begin. The controversy engages one within the arcane worlds of science and theology. Rare is the individual who is competent in both.<sup>28</sup> Christians, while believing in the value of empiricism and reason, also accept the validity of biblical truth. Unlike our opponents, we have to determine whether or not we have properly understood the physical/scientific evidence as well as the evidence of Scripture. Like scientists, Christians believe that new evidence can modify our theological systems, and we do not simply give up our system just because a problem or two arises.<sup>29</sup>

## THE DECISION

Some Christians may wish to side-step the problem by ignoring the doctrine of creation. Yet that road is simply not an option. The doctrine plays too important a role in the development of a worldview to ignore. Information and ideas are simply multiplying too quickly for a believer to have time to investigate and see what the Scripture says on each topic.<sup>30</sup> The doctrine of creation provides an ideological rubric by which a person

27 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 516.

28 The author does not claim to be an expert in science. While interested in science, the author tends toward a more naturalist view of the discipline than the atomistic view that presently pervades the field.

29 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

30 Neil Postman in his book *Technopoly* decries the loss of wisdom in the fog of volumes of data. Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, Paperback ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

can quickly evaluate an idea and/or thought to see if it merits further investigation. Such a rubric is not perfect, nor is it without exceptions “to the rule.” However, once the outlines of the doctrine are delineated and the implications explained, believers are well on their way to intellectually maturing in the faith and thereby reducing sins of ignorance.<sup>31</sup> The doctrine also provides a point of engagement with the non-Christian world. Since everyone has beliefs about the world around them, a proper grounding in the doctrine of creation allows believers to discuss issues of societal and spiritual significance without necessarily appealing to Scripture. Under no circumstances should believers avoid their responsibility for the direct proclamation of the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20). It is just that the doctrine of creation gives us a point of contact with non-believers (i.e. we all live on the same planet) upon which we can appeal to their sense of God’s existence (Romans 1) and ultimately to present the full gospel.<sup>32</sup>

Christians may despair about the evolution-creation debate, but if we take the providence of God seriously, then we must ask ourselves what we should learn from this ideological challenge. It is with persistence that we should engage this issue. Christians must be faithful to God’s Word while endeavoring to engage science. However, we must also be sure that we do not simply change our interpretation because “science” says we should. Likewise, we should not simply hold on to a treasured interpretation of Scripture by arbitrarily denying science. This paper seeks to ascertain the bedrock of doctrine in Genesis in conversation with scientific findings in order to find a way, if any, to bridge the divide. It is imperative for Christians to hold to the truth without becoming dogmatists to a creed that is no longer biblical.

31 Simkins presents an interesting diagram to illustrate the elements that comprise a worldview. Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator & Creation*, 27.

32 Paul’s work on Mars Hill is the classic example of using the doctrine of creation to engage the attention of non-believers, especially those with little understanding of a biblical worldview. Dr. McGrath sees opportunities for Christianity if it dialogues with ideas of the non-theological world. Alister E. McGrath, *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 19ff.

## METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

Christians derive their understanding of the doctrine of creation from three basic areas: Scripture (including ecclesiastical reflection on Scripture), philosophy (thinking about thinking), and science (engagement with the natural world).<sup>33</sup> Like a criminal investigator, the theologian must sift through mounds of data and testimony, often at conflict with one another, to determine the most coherent and reasonable explanation. The challenge is magnified due to the changes occurring with the various witnesses. When one witness changes his testimony (or if the investigator understands the evidence differently), then the relative value or meaning of the testimony of other witnesses is impacted as well. Like a spider web, touch one strand and the entire web experiences the impact. Additionally, investigator bias plays a critical part in how the data is assessed and understood.

Since an unrecognized bias is the most dangerous one, the reader should know that the biases of this investigator, to continue the metaphor, are as follows. First, Scripture holds primacy of place.<sup>34</sup> Although biblical critics love to trot out the tragedy of Galileo and the geocentrism debate, the fact remains that Scripture, as traditionally understood by Christians, has a commendable track record when evaluated against the tests presented by archeology.<sup>35</sup> Second, science and philosophy equally require faith in their respective presuppositions. Their conclusions are not as objective as their proponents contend.<sup>36</sup> Christians should engage these disciplines and serve Christ in them, but always with the mindset that they do so

33 This idea follows the outline used in the previously cited text by Copan and Craig., *Creation out of Nothing*.

34 Davis provides an excellent summary of the complex hermeneutical issues raised by science and scriptural exegesis in the opening pages of his article, Davis A. Young, "Scripture in the Hands of Geologists (Part 1)," WSTJ 49, no. 1 (Spring 1987).

35 Edwin Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archeology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972; repr., 1981).

36 Thankfully, this truth is becoming more recognized by those in the scientific community.

in submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the investigator recognizes that his finitude<sup>38</sup> and depravity negatively impact his ability to know and properly understand all the data.

The challenge, of course, is finding a way to harmonize the conclusions of science with those of biblical exegesis. The road is long and full of pitfalls.<sup>39</sup> Essentially, the church has three options broadly defined as follows: (1) jettison a Christian understanding of creation and adopt an evolutionary theology;<sup>40</sup> (2) maintain the *prima fascia* reading of Genesis, often maligned as the literal reading; or (3) adopt a dual sphere approach (also known as a concordism), in which evolution tells the how of creation and Scripture explains the why, thereby harmonizing the two perspectives.

Christians should reject the first option without much consideration.<sup>41</sup> Adherents to these theories adopt critical assumptions toward Scripture and engage in questionable exegesis.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, these evolutionary theologians have accepted the message of the evolutionists. But despite their triumphant claims, evolution is not a fact. This is not to suggest that calling evolution a theory implies that it is just a fanciful idea. But to insinuate that rejection of evolution is on the same intellectual level as

37 1 Corinthians 10:1; Proverbs 1:7.

38 In a principle known as a Godel's Incompleteness Theorem, Kurt Godel contended that man can never know everything. Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 1993), 85.

39 For an excellent outline of the various Christian views on creation visit Stephen C. Meyers, "The Bible and Science: The Creation Controversy," Institute for Biblical & Scientific Studies, last modified September 14, 2005. <http://www.bibleandscience.com/science/creation.htm>.

40 Peacocke.696. Peacocke is historically naïve to suggest that "whatever we call it, it is a thought framework now sufficiently well-established that it is impossible, inconceivable, for us to set ourselves back into the temporal framework that has largely shaped theology, which for the present purposes I will take to be Christian theology." He continues on page 698 saying, "Any theology—any attempt to relate God to all-that-is—will be moribund and doomed if it does not incorporate this perspective into its very bloodstream." See similar claims, albeit less arrogantly, by S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis: With Introduction and Notes*, Tenth ed. (London: Methuen & Co. LTD., 1916), xli-lxx.

41 Peacocke.698-9.

42 See *ibid.* and Sjoerd L. Bonting, "Chaos-Theology: A New Approach to the Science-Theology Dialogue," *Zygon* 34, no. 2 (June 1999).

rejection of a round earth simply does not understand the graduated level of certainty in knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Consider the following issues that should caution one about blind acceptance of the theory. Aside from the theory's questionable assumptions,<sup>44</sup> evolution has several key weaknesses. First, does evolution, as explained by Dawkins, allow enough time to mutate into the world as we know it today? Despite Dawkins' claims that "cumulative selection" gives evolution the ability to create life within 4.5 billion years (the age of the earth as he dates it), the question still stands, "Is there enough time for random mutations to give rise to the world as we see it today?"<sup>45</sup> Yet Dawkins acknowledges the theoretical validity of the argument from complexity but conveniently neglects to provide a specific criterion of what is needed to convince him.<sup>46</sup> Second, evolutionists frequently crow about the principle of falsification. Yet they have not really demonstrated a willingness to show what evidence would in fact falsify evolutionary belief.<sup>47</sup> Third, how does an evolutionist account for

43 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 22f. The author agrees with Miller that some criticisms of science are little more than a child's game of "were you there?" However, one should respect that finding a fossil doesn't really tell us much, as it must be interpreted within an intellectual framework that often cannot be tested (in contrast to modern criminal investigations of crime scenes). John Warwick Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*, 2nd. revised ed. (Bonn: Culture and Science Publ., 2003), 41. Montgomery explains the differences between different levels of knowledge. See also Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis. New Developments in Science Are Challenging Orthodox Darwinism*, Paperback ed. (Chevy Chase: Adler & Adler, 1985, 1996). Chapter 8.

44 It is not that questioning the assumptions is not appropriate. It is. But pointing out a system's internal incoherence or its inability to address certain data provides for a more open conversation. Too often debates on presuppositions boil down to a screaming match.

45 Richard Dawkins., *The Blind Watchmaker*, 49, xi, xv.

46 Richard *ibid.*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 91. The author also had the opportunity to speak to a recent B.S. (Biology) graduate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln about evolution. A supporter of evolution and knowledgeable of the design movement, he candidly stated that the principle of falsification was a real problem for the theory (personal conversation, May 12, 2005). Ironically, Dawkins continually exhorts his reader to avoid the argument from "personal incredulity" (Richard *ibid.*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, 38). Yet one wonders what he would think about the possibility of the resurrection. Would he use the "argument from personal incredulity" to deny it? Perhaps Christians would gain a better hearing if we claimed that the body of Jesus immediately evolved into a higher form of life.

47 Cf. Michael Denton, *Evolution; A Theory in Crisis*, chap. 15; Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

the variety of beliefs in the world? If our minds are just the result of DNA, then how is it that some people believe in God, ghosts, astrology, etc. and others do not? Are these beliefs a necessary part of the process of natural selection? If so, why the contempt for people who believe differently?<sup>48</sup> Could it be that people who believe in these “unscientific things” have actually adopted a good survival mechanism so they can pass on their genes?<sup>49</sup> Could they be mutants? And if they are mutants, what criteria should be used to determine who is normal and who is not?<sup>50</sup>

The church should be very wary of any call to jettison its historical understanding of such a significant doctrine as the doctrine of creation without serious reflection. Certainly many point to the church’s unfortunate stand with Galileo as evidence that the church’s understanding of the Bible is not infallible. Nevertheless, the doctrine of creation is of a different order than the interpretation of one verse in Ecclesiastes (Eccl. 1:5). There can be little doubt that Genesis, and scriptural interpretation of its account (Matt. 19: 3-6; Mark 10:6; Luke 17:26-7), presents readers with a perspective on the world and their place in it.

Option number two, the *prima fascia*<sup>51</sup> reading of Genesis, is quite popular in Christian-Evangelical/Fundamentalist circles.<sup>52</sup> This view, held by individuals known as “Young Earth Creationists,” states that God created the universe, and more particularly the earth, within six distinct twenty-four hour periods.<sup>53</sup> The events took place in essentially the order in which they are listed in the biblical record, and God created the universe in complete maturity. They believe that the earth is only around

48 Richard Dawkins., *The Blind Watchmaker*, x-xi, 38, 43. See also Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God*, 284.

49 Inspiration for this argument came from Victor Reppert, *C.S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea: In Defense of the Argument from Reason* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), which I reviewed for *The Emmaus Journal* 12 (2003): 320-321.

50 Thanks go to my wife, Donna Vantassel, for this thought.

51 This view is often called “literal” in a pejorative manner. The author has chosen to use a less emotionally loaded term, as he believes the Young Earth creationists are not naively simplistic in their understanding of Scripture as the term “literal” would suggest.

52 Simply type in “Creationism” into an internet search engine to see for yourself.

53 “Institute for Creation Research,” accessed. <http://www.icr.org/>. Dr. Henry Morris is a key proponent of this view point.

10,000 years old as compared to an earth of 4.5 billion years.<sup>54</sup> Fossils and changes to the earth's geology resulted from the catastrophic effects of the flood. It accords with a plain reading of the text and aligns with many historic teachings of the church. Jesus appears to treat the Adam and Eve and Noahic events as historical (Matt. 19: 3-6; Mark 10:6; Luke 17:26-7). As mentioned above, the plain reading also has the added advantage of being peculiarly believable even in our modern "scientific age." There is nothing in the passages that smacks of incredibleness. Young Earth creationists even read the genealogies of Genesis as truly father to son relationships, which further supports their Young Earth views.<sup>55</sup>

The problem begins when one considers the findings of "science," particularly in the area of the age of the earth/universe and the fossil evidence. Scientists claim, on the basis of the time needed for starlight to reach the earth, radioactive dating, etc., that the earth is 4.5 billion years old and the universe is 10-15 billion years old.<sup>56</sup> Even if one discounts these provincial dating methods, the Young Earth creationists still have to contend with the findings of dendrochronology and varve dating.<sup>57</sup> Even with the lower dates, one can see that the differences between official scientific belief and the Young Earth creationists is large indeed. It should come as no surprise that the differences spark contentious debates and not a few attacks on the characters of the players.<sup>58</sup>

54 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 77.

55 Bishop Ussher was so confident in the historical veracity of Scripture that he calculated the year of creation to be 4004 BC. Others must have shared his conclusion, for the date was placed in the margin of some editions of the KJV.

56 The National Academies, *Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences*, Second ed. (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 4-5.

57 Jane McIntosh, *The Practical Archeologist: How We Know What We Know About the Past* (NY: Facts on File Publications, 1986), 134-5. Dendrochonology goes back 8,200 years and varve dating almost one million years.

58 Dawkins claims that creationists have misused or mischaracterized beliefs such as "Cladism," punctuated equilibrium, and fossil forgeries. Richard Dawkins., *The Blind Watchmaker*, 284, 225ff. Not to be outdone, creationists also charge evolutionists with doctoring diagrams (John Woodmorappe and Jonathan Sarfati, "Miller's Mangled Arguments," *TJ*, 2001.): 29-30) or inflating the value of pro-evolutionary findings (Michael Behe, "A True Acid Test: Response to Ken Miller," Discovery Institute's Web site, last modified May 28, 2002, accessed July 10, 2005. <http://www.trueorigin>).

This author believes that it is impossible for modern man to read the Genesis account from the perspective of a *tabula rasa*. The ideology of evolution has simply permeated too many areas of our culture for someone to read Genesis without thinking about how it matches with the prevailing scientific view of the universe's age and development.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the best we can do is to determine the interpretational boundaries for someone with a high view of Scripture.<sup>60</sup>

### A CONCORDIST APPROACH?

Christians believe that ultimately science and faith are compatible because God is Lord of both nature and Scripture. Any difficulties present between science and Scripture must be understood as apparent and not real, stemming from either incomplete information, misunderstood information, or improper assumptions. Regrettably, there is little common ground between the various views. Adherents to the hard-line positions of Young Earth Creationism and Darwinian Evolution will certainly criticize middling positions as “weak thinking” compromise. Certainly one must be cautious of the “academic fallacy”<sup>61</sup> which assumes that whenever there are two opposing views, the truth must be in the middle. It could well be that the truth lies closer to one pole than the other. Nevertheless, it is apparent to this author that a compromise approach is both necessary and

org/behe02.asp. Granted that Behe is not a creationist, but his critique of Miller is nevertheless illustrative.

59 The author sees this point as self-evident. One need only visit a local public school, museum of natural history, or any science program by Public Broadcasting to see how evolutionary philosophy infiltrates discussion of everything related to the natural world. Even seemingly benign topics such as giraffes on the Serengeti will never fail to include an introductory comment on how many millions of years ago giraffes emerged on the earth. See also Michael Heller, “Cosmological Singularity and the Creation of the Universe,” *Zygon* 35, no. 3 (September 2000): 678.

60 A high view of Scripture is understood as belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and the historicity of Genesis in that they accurately portray God's activities in creation as opposed to a mythical understanding.

61 The “academic fallacy” is not an official fallacy. It was created by the author.

prudent. By evaluating the Scripture in light of the differing perspectives, we will discover if a compromise is available. Let us begin to search for this middle path by outlining the respective strengths and weaknesses of each source of evidence. In this way, perhaps we can discover how to evaluate the relative weight of each of the pieces of testimony.

Let us begin with the Young Earth creationists. Unfortunately, Scripture is not as clear about the creation of the universe as they would have us believe. At first glance, Genesis 1 suggests that the universe was created within six twenty-four hour days where God's creative work entailed little more than the time needed to speak materials (and their organization) into existence. Upon closer inspection questions begin to emerge. First, it is very likely that Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 actually speak of a two-stage creation (as opposed to the gap theory).<sup>62</sup> In verse 1, God creates matter and space, followed by verse 2, which has God utilizing those raw materials to create the universe.<sup>63</sup> With this understanding, the dating of the universe is of a different order than the dating of the earth—and in effect the science behind both issues is different. Second, the semantic range of *yom* (day) prior to the creation of the sun has also been called into question from ancient times.<sup>64</sup> Ultimately, the issue boils down to an exegetical one. What should be taken as the primary modifier of *yom*? Should we accept science and our knowledge of time, which requires the

62 Hayatah in Genesis 1:2 should be understood as “was” rather than “became.”

63 A strong case is made for this interpretation by Copan and Craig., *Creation out of Nothing*. They also claim that a two-stage creation harmonizes well with Scriptures that suggest creation *ex materia* (Isa. 45:18; 2 Pet. 3:5). See also Lim., “Explication of an Exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3.”

64 Stephan C. Meyers, *The Bible and Science: The Creation Controversy*, says, “In another place Philo says, ‘Creation cannot have taken place in six natural days, for days are measured by the sun’s course, and the sun is but a portion of creation’ (Philo 1929, xiii),” at [http://www.bibleandscience.com/bible/books/genesis/genesis1\\_day1.htm](http://www.bibleandscience.com/bible/books/genesis/genesis1_day1.htm) The church Fathers were also divided on the issue. On Genesis. Augustine said, “No Christian will dare say that the narrative must not be taken in a figurative sense,” as found at <http://www.holycross.edu/departments/religiousstudies/alaffey/Augustine-Genesis.htm>. Theophilus saw Genesis 1 as referring to twenty-four hour days (Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: 3 Volumes in One*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996)., 2:22. See also Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God*, 255.

sun to get a twenty-four hour day, to carry the interpretation (the sun not being created until day four)? Or should we accept the phrase “evening and morning were...day” as requiring *yom* to mean a twenty-four hour period, irrespective of when the sun was created?<sup>65</sup> Additionally, Scripture does not plainly tell us the earth’s age.<sup>66</sup> This fact should be not taken as evidence in favor of the view that the universe is billions of years old<sup>67</sup> or that the earth is millions and millions of years old. It is just to say that Scripture does not give us insight into the age of the earth.<sup>68</sup> The author has long wondered how the Young Earth creationists could date the earth prior to Noah’s time.<sup>69</sup> It seems that Peter suggests that the Noachic world was destroyed in a manner that foreshadowed God’s second cataclysmic judgment of fire (2 Peter 2:5).<sup>70</sup> If that is the case, it would be difficult to think that there would be much viable scientific data available to use to date the earth.

Additionally, there is the question of the purpose of Genesis 1 and 2. Some interpreters of Genesis reject the notion that the opening chapters provide a chronological record of God’s activity. Genesis is seen more as providing theological meaning rather than details of God’s creative act.<sup>71</sup>

65 Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 109.

66 See Ronald Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 147-163.

67 G. J. Whitrow, “The Age of the Universe,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 5, no. 19 (November 1954): 223.

68 It is sometimes asserted that God “lied” if the universe looks old and it is in fact not. Of all the criticisms of Young Earth creationism, this is by far the most silly. See the following footnote.

69 Appeal to the genealogical records does not solve the problem because it would assume that the genealogies were complete and were stating a father-son relationship. Consider Matthew 1:1 as an example of a genealogy that, while true, is clearly not a three generation list. However, J. Paul Tanner, “Old Testament Chronology and Its Implications for the Creation and Flood Accounts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172 (Jan-Mar):24-44 argues there are no gaps in the generations list.

70 Peter uses *kosmos* here suggesting, at minimum, all the people. Walter Bauer, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979), 446.

71 This view can be found in almost any book on creation and evolution written from a western theological perspective (except for those identified as creationists).

The framework view believes the point of Genesis 1 is to show that God established realms and rulers which ultimately culminated in mankind being the earth's sub-regent under God.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, some arguments against Young Earth creationism fail to carry much weight. The common assertion that Adam did not have enough time to name the animals, recognize his loneliness, get put to sleep, and find Eve all on the sixth day can easily be explained.<sup>73</sup> It is true that *’ôp* can mean insects as well as birds.<sup>74</sup> However, a Hebrew phrase string search on the entire phrase “every bird of the sky” (NASB) using BibleWorks 6.0<sup>75</sup> showed that, in every example, the phrase pertained only to birds (Gen. 2:19; 9:2; Ezek. 31:6; 31:13; 32:4). Contrary to Archer's claim, Adam did not need to name the insect population on the sixth day. The number of animals Adam needed to name was probably much smaller than people would ordinarily think. God did not bring every animal on the planet to Adam. Rather, he brought *every* animal in the garden to Adam. The adjective “every” is modified by the geographical context of Adam's location, which was the garden. It is possible that the modern world has a wider variety of species than that which existed in the days of Adam.<sup>76</sup> Young Earth creationists do not deny micro-evolution which can have birds forming different kinds of birds. What they deny is that a snake evolved into a bird.

Another common canard used against Young Earth creationism is the

72 Lewis and Demarest., *Integrative Theology*, 2:24. Dr. Meredith Kline modified this theory to show the realm/ruler idea.

73 Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 59-60.

74 Carl Schultz, “*’ôp*,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 655.

75 Michael S. Bushell, Michael D. Tan, and Glenn L. Weaver, *Bibleworks* 7.0 ed. (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, 1992-2005).

76 Michael Denton, *Evolution; A Theory in Crisis*, 44. Denton explains one of the key reasons for evolution's acceptance was the discovery that species were not as “fixed” as previously thought. Here is an example of how a broader understanding of *min* to mean “kind” rather than the more specific “species” could have muted this evidence for evolution. (cf. Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25; 6:20; 7:14; Lev. 11:14-16, 19, 22, 29; Deut. 14:13-15, 18. Ezek. 47:10.)

strange assertion that God lied if he created the universe with “age.” The argument states that if the world looks old, as we understand the evidence, and in actual fact the earth is not old, then God lied and he is therefore not to be trusted.<sup>77</sup> The problems with this attitude are so fantastic that it is difficult to know how to convincingly respond. Let us consider the birth of a child. When we ask how old is the child, the parent normally gives its age based on the date of birth. However, the fact is, the child is really nine months older than that. Did the parent lie? When an inventor creates a new tool, how should he date the object? Should it be dated by the time that its constituent parts were created or should it be dated from the time the entire entity was put together?

Theistic evolution can be understood as a mediating position between Young Earth creationism and atheistic evolution. As such, this view does promise some significant advantages. First, it is possible to understand that God’s creative action took varying forms other than the commonly known verbal creation (“**God said....**,” Gen. 1:3). Genesis also suggests that God employed intermediate creation (“**Let the earth bring forth....**,” Gen. 1:11), and artistic creation (“**God formed man....**,” Gen. 2:7). Granted, the evidence is not overwhelming. Genesis uses at least two different verbs (see Gen. 1:11, 20) and places direct rather than intermediate creative power in God himself in the creation of sea creatures (see Gen. 1:21 versus 1:12 for plants).<sup>78</sup> However, the Scripture is vague enough to allow some wiggle room. Second, there is value in the notion that scientists need to perform their research from a theistic perspective, as it would be inappropriate to simply use God every time a particular problem arose (i.e. the so-called “God of the gaps”).

On the other hand, the position<sup>79</sup> has some serious weaknesses. The

77 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God*, 76-79.

78 See Gerhard Von Rad, Genesis, 53, who says “the earth [is] summoned and empowered to maternal participation in this creative act.” Note C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One*, trans. James Martin, vol. 1, 1-10 vols., Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985 reprint), 56, where the intermediary or evolutionary nuance is downplayed.

79 The author understands that there is a broad spectrum of beliefs under the theistic

primary weakness lies in their assertion that Genesis 1 is theological and not scientific.<sup>80</sup> Obviously Genesis is not a scientific treatise, at least not by modern standards. Nevertheless, Christians must acknowledge that Genesis 1-11 is at least as historical as Genesis 12-50. On a structural level (cf. **these are the generations of...**), Genesis is a coherent whole. Division of the book as mythical and historical at chapter 12 is completely arbitrary. Arguments for figurative language and unscientific language in other portions of the Bible fail to distinguish between passages written from a human perspective and those from a divine one. Clearly Genesis 1-2 was written from God's point of view because no one was around to witness the event. Christ treated the narratives as real and the outline within the book itself compels one to treat the book as a unity and a record of real testimony.<sup>81</sup>

Second, Scripture teaches that the universe was created through the action of God *ex nihilo*. While this itself is not a problem for theistic evolution, it does raise the question of why God wanted to wait billions of years before creating the earth.<sup>82</sup> If God could make matter and energy from nothing, why stop there? Why not make the whole universe in six normal days?

Third, theistic evolutionists need to discuss how the evolution of man relates to Scripture.<sup>83</sup> One wonders if they really take seriously the fact that humans are qualitatively different from the animal kingdom. The author studied at a well-known Christian college. During a biology class,

evolution title. However, he trusts the reader will recognize the value of speaking in broad strokes here.

80 This point has been mentioned earlier, but see also S. R. Driver, *Genesis*, Driver. lxii-lxx.

81 From a class with Dr. Kline at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1988; see also Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, vol. 2, 1-3 vols. (S. Hamilton, MA: Meredith G. Kline, 1985), 22.

82 cf. Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 244.

83 Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 64-65. Archer's method of getting around the problem of the evolution of man is to assert that pre-human hominids were not created in the image of God. His explanation strains belief because it assumes these creatures were in man's line of development and neglects the intimate language surrounding God's direct creation of Adam and Eve.

he asked the professor the following question, “What makes man different from the animals? Is it that our molecules are just organized differently? If so, at what point in evolution did the animal turn human? Or do humans have something that animals do not have?” The instructor, knowing he was being set up, did the only thing he could and still maintain his position as a supporter of evolution and a Christian. He simply smiled and refused to answer the question.

Another key problem that theistic evolutionists have relates to the randomness of evolution. If new species form from the mutations of existing species, then it is indeed likely that humans will continue to evolve in a macro-evolutionary way. Granted, the time required would take millennia, but the point still remains—namely, that there is a point at which humans will give rise to another form of life. The difficulty this poses cuts to the heart of the atonement. If God became man in order to deliver us from our sins, then is it possible that forgiveness would only be effective for those organisms which are actually “human”? Would it be necessary that God become incarnate yet again in the new form in order to deliver the new top species from the horrors of hell?

## CONCLUSION

Where does all this leave the contemporary Christian? First, science has demonstrated that it is reasonable (at the present time) to believe that the universe did in fact have a beginning.<sup>84</sup> Second, Christians need to understand that science assumes the regularity of scientific laws through the ages. This is not a criticism, as it would be hard to do science without this assumption. I agree that scientists, even Christian ones, need to adopt a naturalistic approach as a method in their research<sup>85</sup>. But at some

84 Ross., 67. Michael Scriven questions whether scientific knowledge of the beginning is even possible. Michael Scriven, “The Age of the Universe,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 5, no. 19 (November 1954): 190.

85 John H. Walton. *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*. (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 2009), p. 153.

point, the method must be replaced with another one, otherwise it is no longer a method and becomes an ideology. The scientific bias against catastrophism and special creation should caution theologians against getting too uptight about every new theory that comes down the pike. There is much that science will never know, and I would suggest that science frequently states it knows more than it actually does. Any survey of the history of science reveals that scientists regularly got it wrong despite their dogmatism at the time.<sup>86</sup> Third, definitions need to be carefully explained and understood. Evolution can mean change in the species (a.k.a. micro-evolution) or transformation from one species to another (macro-evolution). With all the bluster of atheistic evolutionists, they do not have as much proof<sup>87</sup> as they think they do. Finding less complicated forms of life in a lower stratum than more complex ones does not prove that one form evolved into another. Sometimes, scientists use terms in place of actual data. One need only look at the arguments being launched against intelligent design. Theologians would do well to carefully inquire about the precise meaning in which a person is using certain language. A Christian can certainly accept the notion of theistic evolution provided that he or she sees evolution as a guided (i.e. non-random) process.<sup>88</sup> The author suspects that many Christian scientists have accepted evolutionary doctrine and actually see God in a deistic rather than a biblical way. If God rolled the dice when he made the universe, then it is critical that the Christian believe those dice were loaded.

The Christian must also limit evolution to the animal and plant

86 Consider ideas such as theories using the terms “ether” or phlogiston or read works on the history of medicine to realize that scientific consensus does not mean as much as is often touted.

87 It is true that some creationists have used the “missing proof argument” against evolutionists in a manner akin to that used by defense attorneys defending a guilty client. The author recognizes the importance of circumstantial evidence and arguing from the results to the cause. The author simply takes issue with the arrogance that some have when suggesting that failure to embrace the doctrine of evolution implies that one’s head is in the sand. For an excellent account of evolution’s scientific weaknesses see Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.

88 Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*. pp. 151ff.

kingdoms only. There is essentially no room to understand humans as a result of evolution from animals. Genesis 2 is simply too intimate and detailed to allow that sort of allegorization. It is critical that Christians recognize that mankind, although tied to creation, is uniquely different as well.<sup>89</sup> One also has to wonder that if too much weight is given to science, then theology will always dance to the scientists tune.<sup>90</sup> What does this tell us about the value of theological exegesis?

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PASTORS

With those broad parameters established, the author believes that the evidence at the present time suggests that Christians should be focusing more attention on a creational (if not six day creation) perspective. With the rise of the Intelligent Design Movement (<http://www.intelligentdesignnetwork.org/>), it appears that evolution may become passé. It would be tragic for Christians to jump on the evolutionary bandwagon just as the wagon's wheels start to come off.<sup>91</sup> While that day may be years away, if it ever arrives, there are too many reasons why

89 Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator & Creation*. His explanation of humanity's place in creation is particularly helpful. See also Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 265-6. Chafer also says that "the divine method of creation is constantly reappearing in the text of the Bible and precisely in accord with that first disclosed in Genesis (cf. Matt. 19:4; Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; 1 Tim. 2:13). The efforts men make to explain away the works of God seem too often to be an attempt to hinder others from any belief in God. The record God has given is worthy of himself. Those who treat the record with contempt treat God with the same contempt, despising divine counsels and rejecting divine grace. The one who embraces the theory of animal ancestry for man dishonors both God and himself." Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Anthropology: Part I," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 100, no. 398 (April 1943), 227. Contra Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012).

90 Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God*, 288.

91 While listening to National Public Radio, the author was impressed with the level of stress in the voices of people worried about the public's continued animosity towards, and ignorance of, evolution. The fear in their voices suggests that the pendulum may be swinging in the other direction.

Christians should be apprehensive about theistic evolution.

Nevertheless, on a pastoral level, Christians should not elevate concerns regarding the manner of God's creativity activity to the level of dogma. Churches should avoid using creationism as a test of orthodoxy. The most important issue is a person's relationship to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Questions related to the doctrine of creation can occur in the context of the believer's growth in the faith. To do otherwise is to put the meat of Christianity before the milk. In other words, the mode of God's creative activity should stay in the charitable no-man's land of "let's agree to disagree."<sup>92</sup>

Likewise, I would suggest that pastors, church elders, and Christians in general, learn to take the latest "breakthrough" or "finding" in favor of atheistic evolution in stride. Relax. Like military reports, the initial ones are usually wrong. Likewise, Christians should not get too excited about evidence that supports a traditional view of creation. These "facts" often are overstated when looked at with greater scrutiny. Instead, focus on the Gospel and salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus is the focus, these other, albeit important, questions, often lose their urgency to be answered.

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“Joy to the World”:  
Understanding the Event of  
“God Becoming Human”  
through a Gadamerian Hermeneutic

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KEYWORDS:

| Christology | Linguistic Turn | Gadamer and Incarnation |  
| Word Becoming Flesh | Joy | God’s Self-Communication |

ABSTRACT:

The “linguistic turn” in the philosophy of language, since the beginning of twentieth-century, has ascertained that all our cognitive consciousness are linguistically constituted and hence debunked any notion of pre-reflective consciousness. This paper will argue that, as a revelatory event, the meaning of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as God’s self-communicative act can be better construed through the use of the philosophical understanding of the “linguistic turn”. In this endeavour, the reflections on the event of Incarnation by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who sees it as an epitome of linguistic philosophy, are employed. The author contends that this could provide a fresh impetus to understand the mystery of the divine incarnation as linguistically-mediated God’s communicative act toward creation. Also, it helps one to understand that such a divine communication accommodates the limitations of human linguistic phenomenon. And, as within the divine economy, the two theological foci—incarnation and atonement—capture the whole essence of Jesus Christ’s person and work, the significance of Christ’s atonement as a redemptive act of God can be better understood as God’s continuing speech-act to invite humanity for a participation in the proleptic joy of God’s fellowship.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Lukan narrative, as recorded in the nativity account, the angel of God brings an extraordinary message to a few nondescript shepherds on the outskirts of Bethlehem. He proclaims to them, “Do not be afraid. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*” (Luke 2:10-11;NIV) The audience of a few nondescript shepherds sits well within the motif of the Gospel accounts, especially, the Lukan account—God choosing the weak and the unwise to shame the powerful and the wise—and thus contrasts and highlights the utmost significance of the announcement. As this good news unfolds, it is the birth of the Saviour, who is the Son of God. The Greek words *μεγάλην χαρὰν* (great joy) in the accusative case are translated with the causal implications of this message as it qualifies the “good news” in *εὐαγγελίζομαι* (I bring good news).<sup>1</sup> The Gospel according to John encapsulates this “cause for great joy” succinctly in the phrase “the Word becoming Flesh.”<sup>2</sup> The event of the incarnation of the divine Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, follows the general paradigm of God’s self-revelation in the history of Israel, only to be culminated in this particular event of God’s ultimate revelation of Godself. Yet, this self-communication of Godself to humanity is not possible to be fully comprehended by the finite human creatures.

As the infinite can never be exhausted by the finite, the manifestation of this infinite mystery in the enfleshing of the Word is essentially bound by the limitations of the creaturely world. In other words, it is God’s accommodation to humanity within which this revelation happens—when the divine Logos becomes human. John Calvin pondered, “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us?”<sup>3</sup> The

1 NIV translates as “that will cause” whereas many other translations use “of” great joy.

2 John 1:14

3 Emanuel V. Gerhart, “Institutes of the Christian Religion.,” in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, 1894, 31, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=h8h &AN=37268859&site=ehost-live>, accessed on 06/01/2017.

traditionally affirmed hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ is a mystery that exhausts all human expressions. Calvin also observed, "Thus, such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as to accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. *To do this He must descend far beneath His loftiness.*"<sup>4</sup> And this condescension of God in human form is the epitome of God's communication which constitutes the aforementioned cause of great joy to all people. This conception of the need for God to accommodate to the human conceptual limitation had faded away with the Enlightenment euphoria of the "almighty Reason." But, in due time, when the illusion of such an "omnipotent" human Reason was lifted off, a right recognition that comprehends and articulates human finitude and cognitive constraint were brought through the "linguistic turn" of the twentieth-century.

Both, in the German tradition of the philosophy of language and the Anglo-American linguistic philosophy, it has been brought to the fore that "the limits of my knowledge are the limits of my world" (i.e. of how I believe the world to be).<sup>5</sup> Such a critique of the Enlightenment inspired "pure reason" detranscendentalizes reason and establishes "language as constitutive of thought."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the constitutive role ascribed to language elevates it to the position that was traditionally held by "consciousness."<sup>7</sup> But, as Crista Lafont warns, recognizing the essential linguistic character of human consciousness should not lead us to the myth that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world" (i.e. of the world that I can talk about).<sup>8</sup> However, keeping Lafont's caveat in mind, we can utilize this "linguistic turn", that locates all our cognitive consciousness as linguistically constituted, to provide a fresh impetus to understand the

4 Ibid. Emphasis mine.

5 Cristina Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, trans. José Medina (MIT Press, 1999), iii.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

mystery of the divine incarnation as linguistically-mediated God's communicative act toward creation. Also, it helps us to understand that such a divine communication accommodates the limitations of human linguistic expressions. As Calvin rightly noted, "For because our weakness does not attain to His exalted state, the description of Him that is given to us must be accommodated to our capacity so that we may understand it," this mode of divine communication exhausts all human conceptual ability.<sup>9</sup> In this endeavour, Hans-Georg Gadamer's interpretation of the event of the Incarnation provides fresh insights and will be explored at length in this paper.

In the divine economy, the two theological foci – incarnation and atonement – capture the whole essence of Jesus Christ's person and work. This paper will argue that, as a revelatory event, the meaning of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as God's self-communicative act can be better construed through the use of the philosophical understanding of the "linguistic turn". And also, the significance of Christ's atonement as a redemptive act of God can be better understood as God's speech-act to invite humanity for a participation in the proleptic joy of God's fellowship. For this purpose, this paper will greatly rely on the insights of the German philosophy of language tradition, especially the linguistic turn of the twentieth-century. The first section will discuss the linguistic turn in philosophy that recognises language not as a mere tool but as a constitutive element in human understanding. The second section will evaluate Gadamer's proposal that identifies incarnation as the ultimate paradigm of linguistic philosophy. His use of the traditional *verbum interius* and his musings on Trinitarian relations and their implications for incarnation will be discussed. The final section will pursue the atonement as a continued invitation to participate in the joy of God's communion.

9 Gerhart, "Institutes of the Christian Religion,," 31.

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## II. THE LINGUISTIC TURN

### *A. Rejection of Language as a Mere Instrument*

In the traditional conception, the role of language was often relegated to that of a mere tool that mediates the subject-object relation. Thus, language was conceived just as a medium for the expression of some prelinguistic thoughts.<sup>10</sup> This purely instrumental view of language was sustained by a conception of an "invariable human reason" that served as the foundation of the philosophy of language from Aristotle to Kant.<sup>11</sup> But this trend has been seriously questioned in the German philosophy of language tradition, popularly called the Hamann-Herder-Humboldt tradition (and also in Anglo-American linguistic philosophy.) Hamann and Herder challenged the Kantian notion of "pure reason" that exists independent of language and critiqued the idea of language as a mere instrument for "fixing and communicating the experience of the world."<sup>12</sup> They noted that relegating the function of language to its designating function makes it merely as an "intra-worldly tool" for representing objects that exist independently of it.<sup>13</sup> They contended that reason cannot be conceived as "alingual" because reason itself is only a "linguistic reason."<sup>14</sup> Hamann categorically stated, "[W]ithout the word, [there is] neither reason nor world."<sup>15</sup> Humboldt followed through Hamann-Herder critique and advances the rejection of the view of language as a mere system of signs to be used as a 'tool' for the transmission of prelinguistic thoughts.<sup>16</sup> Humboldt reiterates his claim by stating, "Whatever man is able to think he is also able to

10 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 7.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 6.

14 Ibid., citing Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophie in Deutschland, 1831-1933*, (1983), 109.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 14 citing A. Flitner and K. Giel (ed), *Werke: Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie*, vol. V (Stuttgart, 1963), 433.

say.”<sup>17</sup> In the Anglo-American tradition, an almost identical insight is found in J. Searle’s principle of “expressibility”: “whatever can be meant can be said.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, this realization has effected the detranscendentalization of reason, as reason “comes to be unavoidably situated in the midst of a plurality of natural languages, which cannot guarantee the unity of reason in the same way as could the extrawordly standpoint of a transcendental subject.”<sup>19</sup> Such a relativization of reason was understood as inevitable in all cognitive processes and also amplified the human epistemic limitations. Lafont observes that the application of this critique makes it possible to view language in its various constituting functions and this constitutive understanding of language has provided a Copernican revolution in the linguistic philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

### ***B. Identity between Language and Thought***

Another facet of this linguistic turn is the establishment of identification between thought and language, *contra* the traditional dichotomy between them.<sup>21</sup> Humboldt observes, “[W]ords and their syntax simultaneously

17 Ibid.

18 John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 19-21.

19 Ibid., 15.

20 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 14.

21 There are alternative views that challenge this identity between language and thought. In phenomenological studies and also in psychological research, the notion that language alone gives rise to thought is challenged. Merleau-Ponty and Edmond Husserl argue that cognition is possible without language. (Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge, 1962) and E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989). D. R. Griffin, G. B. Speck note that research among monkeys show that they are capable of making decisions on the basis of judgments of whether a given stimulus is familiar or not, which is difficult to explain without episodic memory. Jordan Zlatev and Johan Blomberg, “Language may indeed influence thought,” in *Frontiers in Psychology* v.6, 2015 accessed at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4628110/> citing D. R. Griffin, and G. B. Speck, “New evidence of animal consciousness,” *Animal Cognition* 7 5–18, 2004. They also point to the fact that chimpanzees and orangutans seem to be capable of planning for the immediate future. These studies may allude to the possibility of thought without the presence of syntactical and semantic structure of a linguistic system. However, it is also noted that this does not in any way endorse the mere instrumentality of language for communication of thoughts. Citing Chomsky,

shape and determine our concepts.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, it is the identity of thought and language that determines the philosophical dimension of the study of language. He observes,

Intellectual activity, entirely mental, entirely internal, and to some extent passing without trace, becomes, through sound, externalized in speech and perceptible to the senses. Thought and language are therefore one and inseparable from each other. But the former is also intrinsically bound to the necessity of entering into a union with the verbal sound; thought cannot otherwise achieve clarity, nor the representation become a concept.<sup>23</sup>

There are no prelinguistic reflections independent of language and all mental conception are essentially language constituted and mediated. Only by its essential identification with speech (language), thought/concept comes into being. Humboldt argues against Kant saying “intellectual activity and language are one and inseparable from each other; we cannot even consider one as generative and the other as generated.”<sup>24</sup> For in language-in the word (*verbum*) only-“a dual unity, of sound and concept, comes together.”<sup>25</sup> Here, the ontological unity between the conceptual word and the uttered word is established. And, this identification of thought to language signals the quintessential linguistic turn.

Humboldt also reiterates the “participative” role of language in “the formation of representations.”<sup>26</sup> Humboldt avers that the knowledge of

Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom aver that “people’s use of language does not tightly serve utilitarian goals of communication but is an autonomous competence to express thought.” Steven Pinker and Paul Bloom, *Natural language and natural selection*, Volume 13, Issue 4 December 1990, pp. 719. Zlatev and Blomberg agree with Katherine Nelson as they conclude that “there are forms of thinking that are indisputably linguistically mediated: internal speech, complex planning, and an autobiographic self-concept.” Zlatev and Blomberg, “Language” citing Katherine Nelson, *Language in Cognitive Development. The Emergence of the Mediated Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Thus, despite a few opposing views, there is a wide consensus that language plays a constitutive role in such “linguistic thought.”

22 Ibid., 20 citing A. Flitner and K. Giel, *Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie*, 54-55.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., citing A. Flitner and K. Giel, *Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie*, 152-3.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., citing A. Flitner and K. Giel, *Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie*, 153.

language and knowledge of the world are inextricably interwoven. He says: “Just as no concept is possible without language, so also there can be no object for the mind, since it is only through the concept, of course, that anything external acquires full being for consciousness.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, language can be no more relegated as a mere tool of reference for human consciousness to grasp reality. It is language that constitutes thought and hence consciousness itself. Lafont rightly concludes that these two aspects of rejection of language as a tool and identification of language and thought establish the role of language as “constitutive of thought, [traditionally attributed to consciousness] and by recognizing accordingly the double status of language as both empirical and transcendental.”<sup>28</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, following in the Hamann-Herder-Humboldt tradition, applies these notions to his hermeneutical understanding.

### III. LOGOS AND LANGUAGE

#### *A. Revelation and “Language as Worldview Discloser”*

Gadamer extends the notion of identity between language and thought as “revelation” (*Offenbarmachen*) through the Christian concept of the “incarnation”. He notes,

... the Greeks . . . did not have a word for what we call language”  
.... This initial “forgetfulness of language in Western thought” is remedied to some extent, not by a Greek, but by a Christian idea of special significance in the Middle Ages: the idea of incarnation  
.... With this idea, it is possible to view *the relation between thought and language* not merely as instrumental, but as a “revelation” (*Offenbarmachen*) in which the word is not distinguished from that which it reveals, but is something that “has its being in its revealing.”<sup>29</sup>

27 Ibid., 25 citing A. Flitner and K. Giel, *Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie*, 59.

28 Ibid., 4.

29 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2 Revised edition. (London ; New York:

Gadamer conceives the identity between language and thought, which is the main plank of the linguistic-turn, as "revelation" and he identifies the Christian conception of incarnation as a paradigm that explicates this understanding.<sup>30</sup> John Arthos remarks on this saying, "Therefore what struck Gadamer was not simply an anticipation of the intimate unity of thought and speech, but the feat of imagination that conceived the unity of transcendent and immanent being. Just so deep is the meaning of language."<sup>31</sup> Gadamer saw great potential in the use of the idea of the Christian incarnation to explicate his hermeneutical understanding.<sup>32</sup>

Gadamer embarks on his exploration of the divine *verbum* in order to elaborate the hermeneutical understanding as he conceived that "Language elevates everything inadvertently, as if by itself, to a more universal, higher level; and, on the other hand, the spiritual can only assert itself through language."<sup>33</sup> Such is the close affinity Gadamer perceived between language and divine *Verbum*, that he concludes that "spiritual can only assert itself through language." Arthos notes that for Gadamer, the Word of God is revealed in human history, "as the nexus between the transcendent and immanent procession will be a kind of touchstone for the idea of discursivity."<sup>34</sup> As Lafont notes, Gadamer is highlighting the elevation of language to a quasi-transcendental state, that allows him to construe the Christian incarnation – the unity of the transcendent and the immanent being – as a prototypical linguistic phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> She notes,

... the most important task confronting the thinking of the Middle Ages, had to do with the relationship between human speech and thought. Here dogmatic theology relied chiefly on the prologue to the Gospel of John and, although theology was applying Greek

Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 421 et passim.

30 Ibid., 89.

31 John Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 6.

32 Arthos says, "This gives some sense of the scope I believe Gadamer gives to the verbum as a contribution to what he calls hermeneutic understanding." Ibid.

33 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 158–9.

34 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 12.

35 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 5.

ideas to its own theological tasks, philosophy acquired by this very means a dimension foreign to Greek thought.<sup>36</sup>

Because Gadamer perceived a prototypical relation between the mode of God’s communication through the incarnation of the Logos and the evident identification of language and thought in the linguistic phenomenon, he interprets the use of Greek notion of Logos as not being a foreign notion but as a relational concept. He states, “The greater miracle of language lies not in the fact that the Word becomes flesh and emerges in external being, but that that which emerges and externalizes itself in utterance is always already a word.”<sup>37</sup> Arthos notes, for Gadamer, “[t]he indivisible bond between the word and the person is a fuller ontological relation than simply the unity of the spiritual and material.”<sup>38</sup> He further notes that, in Gadamerian understanding “[t]he innovation of the doctrine of the word is to reverse the trend set in motion with the Greeks that the reasoning faculty distills the mind’s work from the accidents of the flesh. Logos is rather the fully embodied medium of human community.”<sup>39</sup> For Gadamer, the embodiment of the Logos is the bold statement of God that overcomes the spiritual-material divide within human finitude by “concentrating history, being, and action into the single locution, the ‘Word’.”<sup>40</sup>

Gadamer expands further saying,

If the Word became flesh and if it is only in the incarnation that spirit is fully realized, then the logos is freed from its spirituality, which means, at the same time, from its cosmic potentiality. The uniqueness of the redemptive event introduces the essence of

36 Ibid.

37 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 139. Gadamer refers to the Johannine proclamation in John 1:14, “the Word became flesh” as a greater miracle of language as he conceives Incarnation as identification between the pre-existent Word and the Word that becomes Human. Michael O’Sullivan comments that here Gadamer is moving away from the Greek idealism toward a greater appreciation for the connection between the word and the thought. (Michael O’Sullivan, *The Incarnation of Language: Joyce, Proust and a Philosophy of the Flesh*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 12.)

38 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*, 2.

39 Ibid.

40 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 417.

history into Western thought, brings the phenomenon of language out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection. For, in contrast to the Greek logos, the word is pure event.<sup>41</sup>

The manner in which Gadamer infers meaning for the history of philosophy through his "linguistic" understanding of the incarnation restates the central importance of this phenomenon for his philosophy of hermeneutics. He avers that the redemptive significance of the event of the Logos emphasizes the historically constituted meaning of the verbum and thus constitutes an essential critique of the Hegelian notion of the "Universal Spirit" by introducing the sense of reflections in philosophy. In his section on "Language and *Verbum*" in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer harps on this two-way referral between the history of philosophy and the *Verbum*. As Arthos notes, for Gadamer the doctrine of incarnation "is more than a mere metaphor".<sup>42</sup> For him, "the link between human language and the theological doctrine of incarnation, if taken seriously, cannot be a [mere] convenience of explanation for language theory."<sup>43</sup> Gadamer is heavily invested in his understanding of the incarnation of the Word and its implications for explicating the relationship between speech and thought and thus for hermeneutics.

Gadamer further builds on the world-disclosing function of language, that is, its character as the constituting and mediating principle of understanding and links it up with the principle of the Christian incarnation. Gadamer is utilizing the biblical understanding of Logos as the creative power of God. He notes,

Creation once took place through the word of God. In this way, the early Fathers used the miracle of language to explain the un-Greek idea of the creation. But most important the actual redemptive act, the sending of the Son, the mystery of the incarnation, is described

41 Ibid.

42 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 2 citing Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 421.

43 Ibid.

in St. John's prologue itself in terms of the word. Exegesis interprets the speaking of the word to be as miraculous as the incarnation of God.<sup>44</sup>

By linking the biblical idea of the Word as both the creative power of God and the redemptive act of God, Gadamer enriches the understanding of Logos as the purposeful communicative speech and act of God. He observes that there exists a background of a shared world-disclosure between God and humanity, within the linguistic paradigm, that serves as the condition of possibility of the *telos* of understanding between the speaker (God) and hearer (Humanity).<sup>45</sup> He asserts, 'it must be emphasized that language has its true being only in dialogue, in coming to an understanding.'<sup>46</sup> The Word-event of the incarnation with all its redemptive significance is the birth of the Second Person of Trinity, which is essentially God speaking the Word to humanity toward a common understanding. Vanhoozer affirms this when he observes that we should follow a "distinctly Christian and theological, which is to say Trinitarian, approach to biblical interpretation that begins by recognizing God as a triune communicative agent and Scripture as the written locus of God's communicative action."<sup>47</sup> This communication by the Trinitarian God as the agent and the incarnation as the action has all the characteristics (analogically) of the human communication.

Gadamer, affirms the hypostatic union of the human and divine natures in the Word in principle but does not divulge into details. This is in accordance with his principle that the concept-speech process does not exhaust the truth meaning. He says,

... the act of becoming is not the kind of becoming in which something turns into something else. Neither does it consist in separating one thing from the other (*kaf apokopen*), nor in

44 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 418.

45 *Ibid.*, 97.

46 *Ibid.*, 446.

47 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2005), 31.

lessening the inner word by its emergence into exteriority, nor in becoming something different, so that the inner word is used up.<sup>48</sup>

As Arthos notes, Gadamer's explication of the doctrine of the incarnation here is "rather cryptic and elliptical."<sup>49</sup> But, it is observable that Gadamer is emphasizing on the non-exhaustible mystery of the embodiment of the *verbum interius*. Arthos concludes,

... the mediation between the material and spiritual realms ... [insists] on the full humanity and the full divinity of the Logos. Here lies the inordinate power of the dogmatic model for hermeneutics, because the question of language is placed in juxtaposition to the person of the word. The nexus between humanity and divinity is not a reduction of some kind, as an overflow or surplus, as a tool or instrument, but contains the whole within it.<sup>50</sup>

When interpreted within the linguistic phenomenon, the union of the divine and the human natures of the Word in the Incarnation can be shown to uphold the mystery of this union as specified within the credal delimiters: "*inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*" ...<sup>51</sup> Thus, Gadamer's ontological turn in hermeneutics avoids the reductionist tendencies in explaining the event of the incarnation.<sup>52</sup> Gadamer specifies that "... there is no point of view outside the experience of the world in language from which [language] could become an object."<sup>53</sup> Language in its world-disclosing function is both the condition of possibility of experience and also its limit; but this does not signify any limit on the divine incarnation. Gadamer, thus, is opening new avenues to understand the mystery of "God Becoming Human" by establishing the analogy between linguistically constituted thought-speech pattern and the incarnation. This

48 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 418.

49 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 22.

50 Ibid.

51 <https://carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/chalcedonian-creed-451-ad> accessed on 06/01/2017.

52 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 22.

53 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 452.

helps us to construe the theological significance of Jesus' incarnation as God's essential communication to humanity.

### *B. Verbum Interius*

Gadamer had clarified that the human word is used only as a “counterpart to the theological problem of the Word, the *verbum dei*—i.e., the unity of God the Father and God the Son.”<sup>54</sup> But the important thing for us, in this manner of conception, “is precisely that the mystery of this unity is reflected in the phenomenon of language.”<sup>55</sup> For him,

Language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it [*zur Sprache kommt*]. Not only is the world world insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. Thus, that language is originally human means at the same time that man's being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, our appropriation of this inherent linguistic constitution of our being demands the recognition of the truth it contains.<sup>57</sup> Gadamer is using this as a basis for expounding the mystery of the Trinity through language.

Here, Gadamer is following the paradigm shift introduced by Humboldt. Humboldt had posited the cognitive-semantic dimension of language, as he viewed language “not as a mere system of signs, as an objectifiable (intra-worldly) entity, but as constitutive of the activity of thinking, as the very condition of possibility of this activity.”<sup>58</sup> In other words, apart from language, there are no alternative categories through which reality can be revealed to us. Following this principle, Gadamer makes use of the traditional Augustinian concept of “*verbum interius*”

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 443.

56 Ibid.

57 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 81.

58 Ibid.

in order to explicate the link between the Trinity and the incarnation as God’s spoken Word. When he was asked about the factor that could be characterized as the “universal aspect of hermeneutics,” he claimed that “it is consisted in the *verbum interius*.”<sup>59</sup> Arthos mentions that, for Gadamer, Augustine’s notion of *verbum interius* “is an extension of God’s utterance, and of world history as a figural and narrative enactment that bespeaks the person of the Word.”<sup>60</sup>

Though Gadamer did not approach this theme from a religious perspective, as Arthos observes, he did not link language to the incarnation and *verbum interius* as merely an example, and it indeed plays a constitutive role in his conception. He portrays the Trinitarian mystery as the “miracle of language.” He says,

The mystery of the Trinity is mirrored in the miracle of language insofar as the word that is true, because it says what the thing is, is nothing by itself and does not seek to be anything: *nihil de suo habens, sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur*. It has its being in its revealing. Exactly the same thing is true of the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>61</sup>

As the word has its being in the process of revealing a thing, the “inner word” has its being in the revealing of the mystery of the Trinity. He further remarks,

... the important thing is not the earthly appearance of the Redeemer as such, but rather his complete divinity, his consubstantiality with God. To grasp the independent personal existence of Christ within this sameness of being is the task of theology. Here a human analogue—the mental word, the *verbum intellectus*—is helpful. This is more than a mere metaphor, for the human relationship between thought and speech corresponds, despite its imperfections, to the divine relationship of the Trinity. The inner mental word is just as consubstantial with thought as is

59 Arthos, *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics*, 1.

60 *Ibid.*, 3.

61 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 419.

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God the Son with God the Father.<sup>62</sup>

He uses the thought-speech relationship within the human realm in order to use the concept of *verbum intellectus* (mental word) as an analogue to explicate the Trinitarian relations. By referring back to his earlier thought-speech identification, he establishes the identification of the revealed Word as the Divine Word, the Second Person in the Trinity. Human mental process is the analogy Gadamer is using to explain this relationship. But, Gadamer is not emphasizing the psychological character of the “inner word” with its prelinguistic connotations, rather he is focusing on the process of utterance and their ontological identity. He says, “The inner word remains related to its possible utterance. While it is being conceived by the intellect, the subject matter is at the same time ordered toward being uttered .... Since a process of thinking through to the end is involved, we have to acknowledge a processual element in it.”<sup>63</sup> This processual conception is very useful to relate the mystery of the inner-Trinitarian relation to the incarnation. By alluding to the Augustinian concept of the “eternal generation” of the Son, Gadamer uses the utterance (creation) of a human word as a cognitive-mental process in order to relate the ontological Trinity to the economic Trinity:

Thus, we can see how the creation of the word came to be viewed as a true image of the Trinity. It is a true *generatio*, a true birth, even though, of course, there is no receptive part to go with a generating one. It is precisely the intellectual nature of the generation of the word, however, that is of decisive importance for its function as a theological model. The process of the divine persons and the process of thought really have something in common.<sup>64</sup>

While talking about the Trinitarian relations, it is apparent that Gadamer is exclusively talking about the Father-Son relations without mentioning the Third Person of the Trinity. Given that Gadamer’s primary motive here not

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 420.

64 Ibid., 421.

being theological and as his purpose was to relate the *verbum interius* of the Trinitarian relations to the Christian incarnation, it is understandable that he is basing his hermeneutical model on such an analogue.

Gadamer understands that the appropriation of the human thought-speech process does imply that it is possible to mistake temporality as entering into the relations of the divine persons. He highlights the essential difference between the divine inner relations and human mental process and hence the limitations of the analogy:

The mystery of the Trinity, which the analogy with the inner word is supposed to illuminate, must ultimately remain incomprehensible in terms of human thought. If the whole of the divine mind is expressed in the divine Word, then the processual element in this word signifies something for which we basically have no analogy. Insofar as, in knowing itself, the divine mind likewise knows all beings, the word of God is the word of the Spirit that knows and creates everything in one intuition (*intuitus*). The act of production disappears in the immediacy of divine omniscience.<sup>65</sup>

With the caveat that human mental process does not fully signify the inner-Trinitarian relations but only in an analogical way, Gadamer explains the mystery of the Trinity as being revealed in the event of the Incarnation: the Word that proceeds eternally from the thought of God has been "uttered" in speech, in the event of the incarnation. This linguistic manner of the conception of "God becoming human" does full justice to the mystery and the revealedness of God's communicative act. Let us proceed to understand the Atonement of Christ as a communicative act.

65 Ibid.

#### IV. ATONEMENT AS INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOY

##### *A. Continuing Conversation*

John Searle observed that, “[I]n a dialogue or a conversation, each speech act creates a space of possibilities of appropriate response speech acts. Just as a move in a game creates a space of possible and appropriate countermoves, so in a conversation, each speech act creates a space of possible and appropriate response speech acts.”<sup>66</sup> When a word is spoken, it anticipates an appropriate response. And when such a dialogue happens in a sequence, “[t]he relationship between actions in sequence thus provides an interpretive resource for both participants ... because each action in a sequence inherently embodies and displays its producer’s interpretation of the prior actions in the sequence.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the act of atonement considered in tandem with the event of Christ’s incarnation produces a semantic sequence, as a continuing conversation, in order to bring the full significance of “God becoming human” in Christ. As in the context of a dialogue “succession is interpreted as bringing into relationship,”<sup>68</sup> as a purposeful communication of God, God-becoming-human in Jesus Christ is an invitation to participate in the good news of “great joy” to all the people. Adam Neder affirms this notion saying, “Our *de jure* participation in Christ is ordered toward our *de facto* participation in him.”<sup>69</sup> He further notes, “Salvation is not first of all a question posed to humanity. It is a truth proclaimed to humanity. But this truth itself poses a question that demands an answer from humanity.”<sup>70</sup>

66 John R. Searle, *Consciousness and Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 181.

67 Daniel Vanderveken and Susumu Kubo, *Essays in Speech Act Theory* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2002), 124.

68 Ibid.

69 Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry Into Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 46.

70 Ibid.

Commenting on Atonement, Adam Johnson remarks, “The invasion of our reality by God in the incarnation is so complete and decisive that there is no meaning or significance left to our own place within this history.”<sup>71</sup> The meaning and significance of Christ’s incarnation and atonement constitute the total meaning of human existence and demands sincere human response. Barth also highlights the importance of this communication by pointing to the Trinitarian essence of this mode of revelation: “God reveals himself in such a way that as Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God is one God.”<sup>72</sup> Barth emphasizes the essential unity (*Einheit*) of God in the Economic Trinity: “In the incarnate, crucified, abandoned and exalted Son we do not know a God different from the Father whom he reveals, and in the work of the Spirit in the Church this revelation is not altered or augmented but verified and applied.”<sup>73</sup> This revelatory act of God is purposeful and consequential as it invites us by enabling our participation through Christ. Johnson observes that Barth would contend that “Christ does not merely create the possibility that we might know him, as if the realization of this knowledge were the result of two actions —Christ’s act and then our response to it. . . . since this revelation has its origin in God’s eternal wisdom and has our participation in this wisdom as its intrinsic goal or *telos*.”<sup>74</sup> The Triune God’s invitation through the revelatory sequence of the incarnation-atonement anticipates the *telos* of human response and participation.<sup>75</sup>

71 Adam J. Johnson, *God’s Being in Reconciliation: The Theological Basis of the Unity and Diversity of the Atonement in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 50.

72 Karl Barth, Thomas F. Torrance, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Church Dogmatics, The Doctrine of Creation, Volume I, Part I : The Work of Creation, Church Dogmatics* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 348.

73 Ibid.

74 Johnson, *God’s Being in Reconciliation*, 50 citing Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, 609.

75 Barthian conception would emphasize the Sovereignty of God under which human response is subsumed and hence eventually all human beings will respond to this invitation by God. However, if we have to account for Calvin’s predestination, this invitation is being extended to those who have been predestined by God and hence would respond positively to God’s continuing communication.

The linguistic paradigm does full justice by helping us to construe the whole significance of human existence as being constituted in comprehending and responding to God’s communicative act in Christ. As Barth elaborates: “By entering into our time, God heals and restores our time in order to re-establish our fellowship with God.”<sup>76</sup> This “decisive and objective invasion of God into our time is ordered towards the subjective realization and fulfilment of this reality in the form of union and fellowship with Christ.”<sup>77</sup> Participation in and through Christ becomes the focal point of Barth. He says, “In this event God allows the world and humanity to take part in the history of the inner life of His Godhead, in the movement in which from and to all eternity He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore the one true God.”<sup>78</sup> While Barth is emphatic about the unity of the Trinitarian Persons in the *ad extra*, he also talks about the real fellowship between the Creator and creature. He avers that human beings have “a share in the Word of God and therefore in God himself – a creaturely share in a creaturely manner, but nevertheless a real share.”<sup>79</sup>

Barth conceives this human partnership with God as a “being by the side of God, the participation of man in the being and life of God, a willing of what he wills and a doing of what he does.”<sup>80</sup> It will be a being not only as an object but as an active subject in the fellowship of God.”<sup>81</sup> Again without blurring the “infinite qualitative distinction” between God and humanity, Barth conceives the possibility of an active human fellowship of with God. Barth approaches this idea through the Pauline notion of *koinonia*, which he defines as “a relationship between two persons in which these are brought into perfect mutual coordination within the framework of a definite order, yet with no destruction of their two-sided identity and particularity, but rather in its confirmation and expression.”<sup>82</sup>

76 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, 609.

77 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2, 346.

78 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 215.

79 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 177.

80 Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/3, 535.

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*

Johnson notes that Barth is arguing that God establishes *koinonia* between Christ and the believer by bringing them into coordination with one another within the history of the covenant.<sup>83</sup> Barth also draws from Paul's description that the Spirit is the agent who establishes this relationship between Christ and the believer. Thus, God's continuing conversation in the incarnation-atonement sequence is an earnest invitation of God to humanity for a fuller participation of God's communion.

### ***B. Experience of the 'Thou' and 'S/he'***

Human experiences are vital for Gadamerian hermeneutics. However, the experience contemplated by Gadamer's argument is completely different from the instrumental-pragmatic experience of the lifeworld.<sup>84</sup> It is the "experience of the Thou" in a relational context.<sup>85</sup> Gadamer emphasizes that what is specific to this experience is that "the Thou is not an object but is in relationship with us."<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the I-Thou relation "cannot consist in a perception of the external world, but rather in the understanding of others by interacting with them."<sup>87</sup> If we apply this principle to God's purposeful communication in the redemptive act of Christ's atonement, this I-Thou relational matrix could help us to understand the significance of atonement as an invitation for intimate communion with God. As Johnson notes, Barth conceives the I-Thou relationship as constituting "a genuine sharing, a genuine fellowship that God seeks with us, and therefore a fellowship and sharing to which we are called and to which we must respond (although one in which God clearly and necessarily retains the priority and initiative)."<sup>88</sup> Gadamer states, "Consequently, the I can be constituted as such only against a 'thou,' for 'thou is the he [sic] facing the I,' that is, 'an object . . . whose essence

83 Johnson, *God's Being in Reconciliation*, 50.

84 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 97.

85 Ibid.

86 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 358.

87 Ibid.

88 Johnson, *God's Being in Reconciliation*, 50.

consists exclusively in being a subject.”<sup>89</sup> By negating the notion of a strict subject-object relationships within human interactions, Gadamer is emphasizing the subject-subject relationship between the I and thou. He is using his hermeneutical observations to conclude that conversations are not possible in an objectified context, but only within a relational context. He further notes that the thou “is also a non-I, but in a different sphere, in the sphere where mutual influence results in common action.”<sup>90</sup> The negation of I as non-I is also encountered within such a dialogical relation where I and thou can mutually participate as in a collective action. While such an analogy has its own limitations in its application to God, the main crux of this conception is to emphasize the partnership of humanity with God in the conversation of the incarnation-atonement sequence.

God does not see us as objects but as subjects, who are equal partners in this conversation of eternal redemptive significance.<sup>91</sup> When construed in such a linguistic fashion, we are able to understand the significance of Christ’s atonement as a participation in the joy of God’s salvation, because we are not mere objects, rather subjects involved in this collective action of the God-initiated redemptive sequence. This can be better clarified through a doxological understanding. Westminster Catechism states that humanity’s “chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.”<sup>92</sup> We are “doxological creatures”, who can find true joy and meaning in life by being active participants in God’s conversation with us through Christ.<sup>93</sup> When we relate to God in an I-Thou relation, we negate our Ego as non-I and experience God through “this redemptive gratitude [which is] the ultimate telos of joy.”<sup>94</sup> Charles Mathewes

89 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 204.

90 Ibid.

91 However, this aspect of being “equal partners” with God has to be understood within the overall relation of Creator-creature dimension. God deigns to make us as equal partners through the Incarnation in flesh.

92 Charles Mathewes, “Toward a Theology of Joy” in Miroslav Volf, *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life*, ed. Justin E. Crisp (Fortress Press, 2015), 63.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., 65.

notes, “The joyful act of praising God—a thankfulness flowing almost automatically from recognition of God’s gifts—is the central action of the human, the self-transcending act in which we begin to participate in our fullest flourishing.”<sup>95</sup> Joy is also a responsive act that is expressed through exaltation and thankfulness, facilitating one into an “extrasubjective relationship.”<sup>96</sup>

However, this relationship does not stop with mere I-Thou axis. It also includes the “third person”. Lafont notes, “Once this subject-subject relation is produced through the counterposing of the first and second person, the character of the third person is transformed.”<sup>97</sup> Gadamer observes, “[T]he he [sic] not only consists in a non-I, but equally in a non-thou; and it is, therefore, not only opposed to one of them but to both.”<sup>98</sup> The I-Thou relationship between an individual and God as if in a vertical plane also includes one’s fellow beings in the horizontal plane. Lafont elaborates:

Only by being elevated to the status of the common object of the first two persons does the third achieve its character of the object. In this way, it becomes an axis of a complementary perspective irreducible to the other: namely, the subject-object perspective. The I-thou perspective constitutes the sphere “where mutual influence results in common action”— that is, the social sphere centered in the subject-subject relation. The I/thou-he perspective constitutes “the sphere of all beings,” the whole of everything the subjects can talk about.<sup>99</sup>

While the I-Thou-S/he relationship matrix enables the third person to attain an objective state, a domain of focus for the excessive joy that results from an individual’s subject-subject relationship with God, within the social sphere, the third person becomes the subject (thou)

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid. 66.

97 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 48.

98 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 204.

99 Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, 48.

for the human individual as in a subject-subject relationship. Thus, our participation in God's redemptive conversation in the incarnation-atonement actively includes the whole of humanity constituting the "the sphere of all beings". Mathewes sums it up as he says, "We [all] are called to become participants in the endless joyful round of love that is the Trinity, learning to receive rightly the proleptic gifts of eschatological joy today."<sup>100</sup> This joy is indeed the proleptic joy that will be consummated in God's eschaton.

Gadamer is locating the communal significance of the incarnation-atonement sequence within the ecclesiastical community, especially in its kerygma and sacrament. He says, "The proclamation of salvation, the content of the Christian gospel, is itself an event that takes place in sacrament and preaching, and yet it expresses only what took place in Christ's redemptive act. Hence it is one word that is proclaimed ever anew in preaching, point[ing] to the multiplicity of its proclamation."<sup>101</sup> These multiple appearances of the one Logos in the world is again an accommodation to the historically constituted human consciousness. He says, "It is true that the divine Word is one unique word that came into the world in the form of the Redeemer; but insofar as it remains an event ... there is an essential connection between the unity of the divine Word and its appearance in the church."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the participation of humanity with the Triune God, modelled in the manner of the inner-Trinitarian relations, is the *telos* of the ecclesial community. The liturgies of the Christian churches, the *kerygma* and sacrament, are all God's invitation to participate in this continuing conversation of God's redemptive act in Christ.

100 Mathewes, "Toward a Theology of Joy" in Volf, *Joy and Human Flourishing*, 65.

101 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 425.

102 Ibid.

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## V. CONCLUSION

The phrase "the Word became flesh" is the most profound statement in the Bible, that even after two millenniums of contemplation on this mystery of "God becoming human," it continues to baffle the human mind. While for a period of time, the Enlightenment enthronement of "absolute Reason" attempted to discredit the mystery of this phenomenon through its naturalistic conception, we find an ally in the "linguistic turn" of the philosophy of language tradition. By identifying the linguistically-constituted consciousness of humanity, the linguistic turn disabused the notion of transcendental reason. Also, it rejected the Kantian notion of perceiving language as a mere tool for designating the phenomenal world. It was made clear that apart from linguistic categories, there are no alternatives to construe and also to relate to one's outside-world. One of the major highlights of the linguistic turn apart from detranscendentalizing reason is the identification of thought/concept with language/speech. By denying the notion of any prelinguistic categories that exist apart from language, the very possibility of a conceptual ability was thoroughly grounded in the linguistic capability of humans. Gadamer also established the identity between the "mental word" (thought) and the "uttered word" (speech). Thus, the rejection of the view that limits language as mere tools of representation and the identification of thought-speech became the quintessential facets of the linguistic turn. This helped in establishing language as constitutive of thought that was traditionally attributed to consciousness. Thus, human consciousness itself was brought within the purview of language.

But above all, it is Gadamer's use of the Christian notion of the incarnation that seals the relevance of a linguistic conception of God's revelation. Gadamer conceives the thought-speech identification as "revelation" and finds great potential in the concept of the Christian incarnation as a paradigm to explicate this identification. He conceives the embodiment of the Logos as a bold statement of God that overcomes

the spiritual-material divide within human finitude as God is not wary of dealing with history, by uttering the Word in the “flesh”. Thus, the revelation of the transcendent-immanent God in the incarnation is essentially God’s communication. Gadamer’s conception of linguistic categories to understand the incarnation is followed by his use of the Trinitarian relations (especially the Father-Son relationship) to explicate the Logos as “Spoken Word”. He uses the Augustinian concept of *Verbum interius*, that was used to explicate the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. He relates it to the mental process of forming a thought in the mind and uttering it as an analogy to explain the event of incarnation. The mental Word that proceeds from the Father in eternity is also the “uttered Word” in the incarnation. Thus, he identifies the Second Person of the Trinity to the revealed Word in the person of Jesus Christ. Though he is cautious about the limitations of using a human concept (mental process) to explain the divine mystery, he is able to explain the mystery of the embodied Logos. Without delving into details on the nature of the union of the divine and human natures in the Incarnation, he is appealing to the limits of human linguistic consciousness that cannot exhaust the divine mystery. However, we should note that there is a “preunderstanding” of Gadamer’s conceptual preference of linguistic phenomenon over the event of incarnation as he draws inference from the latter to establish the ontological unity of speech and thought. Also, his understanding of inner divine relations is construed primarily as a binity conception as the Spirit seldom figures in the generation and procession of the Word.

Yet, it can be agreed upon that Gadamer, even without a theological intent, has done a commendable job in explicating the event of the incarnation through the linguistic aspects of thought-speech identification and mental process. This analogue helps us to conceive the redemptive act of God in the incarnation as a communicative act. Further, through the use of the speech-act, we are able to conceive the Atonement of Christ as a continuing conversation of God, that invites us to a fuller communion with the Triune God. This participation becomes the *telos*

of God's communication in the incarnation-atonement sequence. And, by rightly understanding the aspect of human experience that is vital for all our hermeneutical endeavours within the I-Thou-S/he matrix, we can understand God's communication in the continuing conversation of Christ's atonement as an invitation to participate in the joy of communion with God in Christ. The doxological nature of our constitution only reiterates this need for a proper response to God's redemptive communication, so as to participate in the proleptic joy of fellowshiping with God.

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**Review Articles**







## Review Article

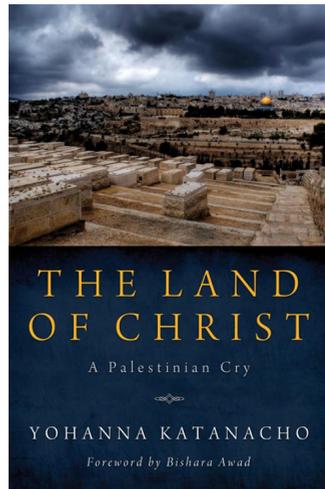
# ‘Christ, Israel ... and a Palestinian Cry’

Richard Flashman

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| Two-State Solution |  
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Yohanna Katanacho was born in June of 1967, now serves as the academic dean for Bethlehem Bible College in the Central West Bank region of the Jordan River under the political control of the Palestinian National Authority. Dr. Katanacho is a Palestinian Evangelical Christian, the son of an Armenian Catholic mother and a Roman Catholic Palestinian father. Although an atheist in his teen years, Dr. Katanacho decided to follow Jesus Christ when he was twenty years old. He then went on to earn a

B.S. at Bethlehem University, an M.A. at Wheaton College and an M.Div. and Ph.D. at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. He has authored several books including: *A Commentary on Proverbs*, *The Seven “I am” Sayings in the Gospel of John*, and *The King of Jews and His Young Followers*.

Clearly he has the background and academic credentials to present a Palestinian evangelical perspective on the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants (going forward referred to as “the promised land”).

Katanacho sets out to provide what he considers to be a biblical view of the land that is rooted in biblical love, faithful to the Bible, and seeks justice for both Palestinians and Jews (6). He challenges the Jewish people’s right to the land believing the promise of “Land” to the “people of God” is fulfilled in the New Testament. To back his position he challenges Jewish claims to the land. Katanacho believes that the land known as Israel belongs to Christ, and that the promises of the land now apply wholly to the New Testament people of God, essentially espousing a replacement theology (i.e. The church replaces Israel as the people of God).

He challenges those who would claim Israel’s continual divine right to the land by attempting to demonstrate how biblically untenable that position has become. First he claims that the biblical borders of the land are unclear, citing various Old Testament texts, which do not appear to agree with each other. Then he tries to show that the term Israel seems to change in definition throughout the Bible. Finally, he argues that God gave the land through Christ, the greater “Israel”- the Israel who actually kept faith with God the Father. He insists that the land cannot be given to a faithless, disobedient, and Messiah-rejecting people based on the teachings of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:63-68, etc. He makes much of this point throughout his book. Katanacho has a particular problem with dispensationalism and dispensationalists. He believes it to be of late historical development, adhered to by corrupt and undereducated people,

and founded on a highly problematic literal hermeneutic.

The author insists the land belongs to Christ, and citing passages like Proverbs 2:21-22 says he will give it to his faithful and obedient people (and certainly not to unbelieving and wicked oppressors). In the author's eschatological understanding, righteousness precedes a return to the land. God will not tolerate an unrighteous people to possess the land (Dt. 28:36-37, 63-68).

Katanacho asserts that the land was the initiation of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God on earth. After the land's curse (Gen. 3:17) God determines to restore it (Isa. 51:3; Eze. 36:35) to be a land of faith, a land of peace, a land of reconciliation, a land that serves as a gateway to heaven, and a land of refuge and safety for the endangered (56-58).

The author argues that none of those sacred purposes are accomplished through the Israeli occupation. In fact, for the author, the Israeli occupation of lands "taken" in 1967 (not 1948) is the great sin and obstacle to peace, which foments the Arab-Israeli Conflict. If it were not for the "occupation" there would not be all the anger and violence associated with the land (47). The occupation is sin because it dehumanized people whom God created (53, 60). Since according to Katanacho the 1967 occupation is the great sin, Biblical resistance to that sin is justified. For Katanacho this means bringing non-violent economic pressure on Israel. That in turn will cause Israel to end of the 1967 occupation and create the conditions necessary for an equitable one or two state solution to be reached (60).

This theme is addressed in *The Palestinian Kairos Document: A Moment of Truth*, which the author includes in the books addendum. This document decries the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the wall that Israel erected separating the West Bank from Israel, Israeli settlements, military checkpoints, the separation of some families, the restricted access to the holy site for Palestinians, the Palestinian refugee camps, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, the exclusion of many Palestinians from living in Jerusalem, various and unspecified human rights violations, the unspecified discrimination of Israeli Palestinians,

the emigration of Palestinian young people from the land, the Israeli overreaction to Palestinians who resist Israeli occupation, the excuse of terrorism used to distort the true nature of the conflict, and the failure of the international community “to deal positively with the will of the Palestinian people expressed in the outcome of the democratic and legal elections of 2006” (74-76). After addressing the issues of hermeneutics and a theology of the land, the Kairos statement calls the U.N. partition of the land in 1948 “a new injustice” (78), and any theology or biblical interpretation, which argues against that premise strips “the Word of God of its holiness, its inclusiveness and truths” (73).

Therefore, “the occupation is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights” (79). The Kairos document puts its hope in the love of God for the Palestinian people, finds solace in the support and prayers it has received from like-minded people around the world, and believes one day justice will be served for the Palestinian people (80-83).

While the document celebrates the anti-retaliatory love of Scripture (Mt. 5:45-47; Rom. 12:17; I P. 3:9), that love does not mean accepting evil or aggression. In fact the Kairos document insists that the evil of the Israeli occupation must be resisted – love demands it (p. 84). But how can it be resisted in a loving way? The Kairos document calls the world to “engage in divestment and in economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation” (85). Thus the Kairos document is a call to inflict economic pain on Israel until they unilaterally end the occupation (85). Since the root of so-called terrorism springs from the injustices of the occupation, pretending to end terrorism first is not a valid approach (85).

The Kairos document ends with a call to settle the Jerusalem question first but does not offer a suggestion as to how that vexing issue might be resolved (89).

While one can appreciate the approach and the passion of the author’s position, it seems to this reviewer there are certain assumptions,

omissions, and biases that seem to undercut the author's arguments and assertions. First the author claims that the various Biblical descriptions of the borders to what might be called "greater Israel" calls into question the notion of fixed literal borders for national Israel. The author sees these descriptions as *literary*, "a spacial merism that refers to the whole world" (39). This, of course, requires that one abandon a grammatical-historical hermeneutic in favor of a more spiritualized approach to Scripture.

While most would agree that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," that fact does not preclude that God can give what is his to whomever he chooses. Instead of abandoning the plain sense of the biblical text, biblical authority might be better served by a more thorough and respectful exegesis. Could there be other explanations for the various boundaries of the Promised Land mentioned in Scripture? Might there be another way to harmonize the various descriptions? For instance, one could just simply argue that all the various descriptions should be "added" together to come up with the final configuration of the "greater Israel" being promised by God. Certainly this approach is at least as valid as abandoning the plain (grammatical-historical) sense of the text. Especially as such abandonment clearly leads to a meaning foreign to the author's original intent.

The same is true for the author's problem with the various identifications of "Israel" and Jewish people in the Bible. What does it matter if those terms include more and more people throughout biblical history? The promises of the land belong exclusively to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The land is literally promised to no one else. This is not to say that others would not benefit from the land promised to physical Israel, many certainly will, but biblically speaking they will do so through the agency of a national ethnic Israel under the rule of the King Jesus. Again, there is nothing in the biblical text that demands the abandonment of the literal meaning of the text, the author's original intent, or a grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

The same is true for the author's concern about how the land is given.

True the land and the world belong to God through the Messiah Jesus. But this does not preclude his giving the land to Israel. And it's true that ultimately, a righteous people will inherit the land. But there is now no one righteous but God alone - certainly not Israel or the Palestinian people. The land will never be inherited by righteous people this side of the second coming of the Messiah Jesus!

So where does that leave us now? The author insists that contemporary Israel is an illegitimate occupier of Palestinian lands because Israel is unrighteous on so many levels. He assumes the land will (or should) “spew them out” (Dt. 28:63-68) one way or another. But Israel lived “unrighteously” in the land for nearly 1000 years before the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC, and then another 500+ years until the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in AD 70. “Unrighteous” Israel has only been back in control of the land since 1948 (or 1967 depending on ones perspective). Biblically speaking, it could be another 1500 years until they are ejected from the land again. God has shown great patience with Israel in past “occupations.”

This of course assumes that God is not now dealing or will not deal with “unrighteous” Israel while they are actually in the land, as they are now. There is Scripture which seems to indicate the recalling of a spiritually lifeless people to the land and then once in the land, the coming of a great spiritual renewal (Eze. 36:24-32; Eze. 37:1-14; Hosea 3; Zech. 12:10ff). Israel was hardly a “righteous” nation when the remnant of Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 5, 9, 10, 13).

Biblically speaking it is entirely possible for these current generations of “unrighteous Israelis” to finally realize their true condition, repent, receive their Messiah, have their sins removed, their spirits revived (Eze. 36:24-32), and be the restored and righteous nation they were always meant to be (Acts 1:8; 3:21). There is no biblical necessity to replace Israel with the church. Especially in light of the New Covenant teaching that the redeemed Gentiles do not replace Israel but are added to Israel (Eph. 2:11-

22). According to the Apostle Paul, they are now fellow citizens of God's Kingdom with God's people (believing Israel) and (fellow) members of God's household (Eph. 2:11-22). Clearly the Gentiles will enter into all the blessings promised to them in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) and throughout Scripture (Isa. 49:6; 9:2; 42:6, 51:4, etc.).

Yes, for a time National Israel will remain in unbelief, rejecting her Messiah. But the day will come, writes the Apostle Paul, after the full number of Gentiles comes in, that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25)! Interestingly, the author does not interact with any New Testament references, which seem to indicate Israel's future restoration (Mt. 19:28; Luke 1:32-33; 21:24; 22:25-30; Acts 1:8; 3:21; etc.) The reader is left to wonder why.

As noted, the Kairos document bemoans the building of the separation wall and military checkpoints but never acknowledges why the wall was built or the reason for military checkpoints, or what those security measures have done for Israel's safety. The document asserts it's the "occupation" which inspires Palestinian violence. If Israel were to end it, the violence would stop. This of course ignores history. There was no post-1967 style "occupation" in 1948, or in pre-war 1967 for that matter. But the Arab world attacked Israel none-the-less. In the mind of this reviewer, the Kairos signers betray either a dangerous disregard for the safety of the Israeli population or a breathtaking naiveté of radical Palestinian hatred and intentions for Israel. Either way Israel would do well not to entrust their future to the Kairos signers' approach to peace.

The disputed lands of the West Bank belonged to Jordan (not any Palestinian entity) in 1967. In that year, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt conspired to attack Israel. Israel defended itself, and in so doing took the West Bank (along with the Sinai, Gaza, and the Golan Heights). Now the Kairos authors want the West Bank to be given to a previously non-existent entity – the Palestinian Authority (PA) whose very charter calls for Israel's destruction.

In 2000-2001, and In exchange for real peace, Israeli Prime Minister

Ehud Barak offered Yasser Arafat and the PA 91% of the disputed territory, but Yasser Arafat turned it down. Was the deal perfect for the PA? Of course not. But it could have been the beginning of a real Palestinian state and a real peace. Yet none of these historic realities is ever mentioned by the Kairos authors – just lovely sounding appeals to justice for the Palestinians through the unilateral handover of the West Bank to the PA.

Katanacho's book was quite helpful in gaining an insight into the Palestinian Christian perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Katanacho is squarely in the evangelical camp (we share the same seminary training) and is a first class advocate for his position.

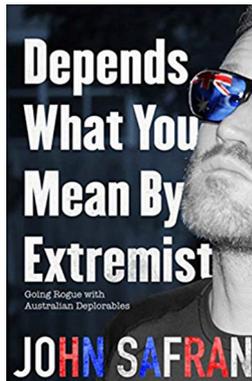
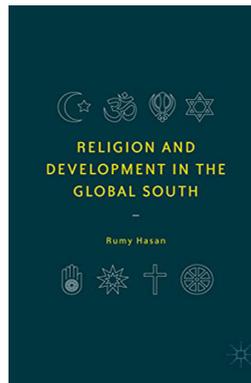
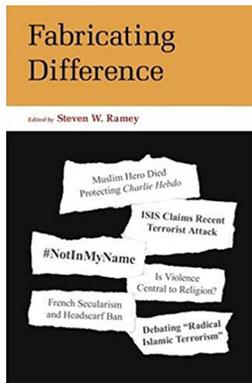
It is good to hear this particular "cry" no matter what your position is on the subject. That being said, the author's failure to interact with the historical realities of the last 70 years and the very real security concerns of the Israeli people undercut the credibility of the author's arguments and caused this reviewer to wonder if this was merely a nicely written propaganda piece for an economic boycott of Israel.

# TER

## Review Article

# Muslims and Non-Muslims: Not all Differences are Fabricated, or Arbitrary

Raphael Lataster



Steven W. Ramey, editor, *Fabricating Difference*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2017; x + 187 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78179-487-6.

Rumy Hasan, *Religion and Development in the Global South*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; xiv + 225 pp. ISBN: 978-3-319-57062-4.

John Safran, *Depends What You Mean by Extremist: Going Rogue with Australian Deplorables*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2017; 287 pp. ISBN: 978-1-926428-77-2.

William E. Arnal, Willi Braun, Russell T. McCutcheon, editors, *Failure and Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion: Essays in Honor of Donald Wiebe*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2012; xii + 243 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84553-898-9.

KEYWORDS:

| Islam | Islamaphobia | Muslims | Non-Muslims |  
| Western Norms | Multiculturalism |

It is common in the post-modern and politically correct world to deny simple facts, particularly concerning groups that may be in some way be oppressed, further claiming that that the pointing out of such facts is abhorrent. In this essay I discuss one such book, contrasting it with the available evidence. This book, *Fabricating Difference*, gives the impression that pointing out perceived differences, differentiation, is typically fallacious and immoral, particularly when it comes to Islam. In an ironic twist, the contributors to this book make the usual demands about minority groups – like Muslims – being given a voice, and yet would likely become uncomfortable when Muslims tell them clearly what they think and feel about ostensibly progressive values. I also survey the work of several other authors, one an ex-Muslim, who stress the importance of objectively discussing the facts. I compare such work with evidence that indicates that mainstream Muslims are indeed very

different to mainstream non-Muslims, including Christians and atheists. This will hopefully encourage more honesty and transparency about what most Muslims believe, and whether these beliefs are compatible with prevailing norms in the West.

## 1. REAL DIFFERENCES

Edited by Religious Studies scholar Steven W. Ramey, *Fabricating Difference* is an interesting collection of essays, largely centred on two primary pieces by Mayanthi L. Fernando and Aaron W. Hughes, that bemoans the othering that takes place when differences are fabricated as similarities are ignored (p. 2). The book does, however, recognise that such fabrications are not “automatically illegitimate”, and can even be beneficial (p. 5). Chapter 1, by Fernando, sets the tone for the collection, by opposing the common perception that ‘Muslims’ and ‘Westerners’ are different (pp. 14-16). She wants to “see France itself [and presumably the West] as a myth” (p. 23), and goes on to note that Muslims have long been in France. Unfortunately for Fernando, she does not provide any evidence that the differentiation is unsubstantiated. In addition, she overlooks the vast amount of evidence that many Muslims and non-Muslims are indeed very different from each other (in regards to moral and political beliefs) – evidence that is strikingly clear, even when we avoid the temptation to essentialise, as the Orientalists of old did.

Not that difference is necessarily and objectively undesirable, I shall not judge here, but many polls (such as Pew’s in 2013) reveal that people who identify as Muslims, relative to people who identify as non-Muslims, tend to be significantly more opposed to women’s and gay rights,<sup>1</sup> and are

<sup>1</sup> A colleague suggested that since Russians are in his view very much against homosexual rights, “the West is just as homophobic”. Apart from the contentious issue over whether Russia is Western, what the term ‘homophobic’ actually refers to, and the problematic approach of tarring every member of a group with the same brush (akin to those absurdly claiming that all Muslims are terrorists), there is also the question of grade to consider. For example, British Muslims express anti-gay attitudes to a greater extent than Russians (see further footnotes). And, as a Christian colleague pointed out, while

far more likely to believe that apostates should be killed (this pertains to averages amongst Muslim communities, not to all individuals; we ought to be careful about generalising – for instance, there are many secular and progressive Sufis).<sup>2</sup> For example, the poll results show that 87% of Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa believe that wives must obey their husbands, and that, amongst Muslims who believe that *shari'a* should be the law of the land, 89% of Pakistani Muslims and 84% of Palestinian Muslims believe adulterers should be stoned to death, and 86% of Egyptian Muslims and 62% of Malaysian Muslims favour the death penalty for apostates. CNN recently reported on a British poll, claiming that 52% of British Muslims “think homosexuality should not be legal”.<sup>3</sup> Some researchers in Europe found that “a considerable stability of religiosity or even an increase therein within Muslim immigrant families, in contrast to Christian immigrant families, whose religiosity declines over generations”.<sup>4</sup> Other studies indicate that Muslim immigrants are overrepresented in statistics concerning violent and sexual crimes.<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not women’s rights, gay rights, religious freedoms, and the like, should be considered ‘French’ or ‘Western’, or even beneficial, such differentiation seems to be at least partly legitimate. Strangely, Fernando appears to criticise government efforts to craft a more secular ‘French Islam’, as if she were oblivious to the dangers – to vulnerable Westerners

a mainstream Christian may simply disagree with a homosexual’s lifestyle choices, a mainstream Muslim’s views on homosexuality would more likely lead to direct violence or political oppression. Various polls and surveys do indicate this, such as the recent Australian survey that reveals that those who identify as adherents of Christianity – and several other religions – are far more supportive of same sex marriage (discussed soon).

2 <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/04/worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-full-report.pdf>. Overview: <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview>. Note: all websites accessed 15 February 2018.

3 <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/11/europe/britain-muslims-survey/index.html>.

4 Konstanze Jacob and Frank Kalter, “Intergenerational Change in Religious Salience among Immigrant Families in Four European Countries,” *International Migration* 51, no. 3 (2013): 38-56.

5 For example, see Martin Hällsten, Ryszard Szulkin, and Jerzy Sarnecki, “Crime as a Price of Inequality?: The Gap in Registered Crime between Childhood Immigrants, Children of Immigrants and Children of Native Swedes,” *The British Journal of Criminology* 53, no. 3 (2013): 456-481.

– of, say, the ultra-conservative Salafi forms of Islam being exported from Saudi Arabia (p. 32). I applaud Fernando's concluding call to engage with Muslim interlocutors (pp. 36-37), however had she actually done so herself (such as with Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, who wishes to see all churches in Arabia destroyed and proclaimed that girls as young as ten are ready for marriage),<sup>6</sup> she might have discovered that at least some of this differentiation is indeed justified.

The following chapters tend to continue in this 'Muslims are unjustly oppressed' vein. Damon T. Berry's response, for example, refers to Western bigotry, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia (p. 43), apparently unaware that many mainstream Muslims are also bigoted, anti-Semitic, and even Islamophobic – consider, for example, the ongoing Sunni-Shia conflicts, and also the actions of ISIS.<sup>7</sup> Somehow Berry finds that the existence of Muslims who are victims unsettles the "Muslims versus Europe" narrative (pp. 44-45). It is here worth considering that there are many Muslims who victimise other Muslims – we need only consider the plight of many Muslim women – and many Muslims who victimise non-Muslims, none of which Berry cares to mention. Perhaps, like many scholars, Berry is influenced by the guilt over the West's history of imperialism, colonialism, and slavery, while overlooking that Muslims were doing these things centuries before the Western powers.<sup>8</sup>

Moving on, the essay by Tara Baldrick-Morrone explains the discursive strategy of purposely portraying one's own group as different, in order to play the victim.<sup>9</sup> The contribution by Vincent E. Burgess finally provides a non-Western oppressor, the strangely 'fundamentalist' Hindu in India,

6 See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-christians-fatwa/europe-bishops-slam-saudi-fatwa-against-gulf-churches-idUSBRE82M1D720120323> and <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/01/17/saudi.child.marriage>.

7 Also known as Islamic State and DAESH.

8 For example, see Ronald Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora* (London: Atlantic, 2002).

9 Christians are the focus here; perhaps a focus on Muslims here would be seen as unseemly, as it is not a favourable portrayal.

but, of course, still finds time to lament the plight of the Indian Muslim. Burgess even refers to Islam as the “*mythic* enemy of Hindutva” (p. 62, emphasis mine). Given the violent spread of Islam throughout Asia, many Hindus might wonder if ‘*historical* enemy’ would be the better term.<sup>10</sup> Andie Alexander’s response improves the tone somewhat, recognising that constructing difference is not “necessarily good or bad”, but is “one of many ways in which social groups work to create and maintain themselves and their identities” (p. 76).

The highlight of the book is Chapter 7. Hughes decries the tendency for scholars and public figures to deny that extremist Muslims are Muslims. Hughes notes that it is problematic that religion is often seen as internal, apolitical, and nonviolent, entailing that the soldiers of ISIS are ‘inauthentic Muslims’ (p. 78). He boldly asserts that the “religious motivations” of jihadists “cannot be gainsaid”, further criticising the hypocrisy of supposedly forward-thinking and anti/neo-Orientalist scholars who are not supposed to deny Muslims their agency (p. 79). Perhaps this hesitance to think of anything negative about Islam is also why so many mainstream scholars lionise and exaggerate the scientific achievements and progressive nature of certain medieval Muslims, whilst ignoring the bloody conquests, colonising, and slave-trading of earlier – and later – Muslims.<sup>11</sup> Hughes correctly notes that ‘Islam’ is neither a religion of peace or of violence, and takes issue with Karen Armstrong’s proclivity for highlighting the political – and presumably irreligious – motivations of jihadists (pp. 80-81). Indeed, mainstream Islam has historically been very political, from its founding, to Muslim colonialism and imperialism over the centuries, to Islam’s status as the state religion of many nations today.<sup>12</sup>

10 See, for example, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2008) and Koenraad Elst, *Negationism in India: Concealing the Record of Islam* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2014).

11 This further reminds me of the so-called anti-racists who make assumptions about a person’s privilege and victimhood, based on their race.

12 Even whilst whitewashing the life of Muhammad, Karen Armstrong acknowledges

Hughes effectively accuses many scholars of harbouring political agendas (p. 81), and asks that we consider the intolerance of the religious, noting that the Muslims of ISIS also fabricate difference and accuse other Muslims of being inauthentic (pp. 81-82). Further probing, Hughes recognises that globalisation “creates sociopolitical tribalism”, and like President Trump, points to President Obama’s unjustified attempts to portray violent Islamists as ‘un-Islamic’ (pp. 83-84). After warning that biased – and effectively theological apologetic – scholars are in the ears of lawmakers, Hughes bravely agrees with Princeton’s Bernard Haykel on the similarities between ISIS and early Muslims (pp. 86-87). He is in good company. Apart from the jihadists, many secular critics of Islam, liberal Muslims, and even some conservative Muslims acknowledge that ‘extremist’ forms of the faith align quite well with literal or straightforward readings of the Quran.<sup>13</sup> If only the apparently ignorant rank and file Muslims knew, like the enlightened and non-Muslim scholars Hughes disapproves of, that the Quran does not actually mean what it says.

Thomas J. Whitley’s response to Hughes’ chapter begins by revealing that most mainline Protestant and Catholic Christians in the United States of America support same-sex marriage (p. 92; contrast this with the relationship between Muslim populations and no-voting electorates in Australia’s recent same-sex marriage survey),<sup>14</sup> indicating that American

his violence and politics. See Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

13 See, for example, the view of liberal Muslim Maajid Nawaz, in Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz, *Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

14 The highest concentrations of no-voters were in areas with the highest proportions of Muslims in Australia. This caused many Australians to come up with answers besides ‘religion’, and specifically, ‘Islam’. See <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/why-western-sydney-voted-no-20171116-gzmmjr.html>. Further research revealed that Buddhists, Jews, and Atheists were strongly supportive, Hindus and Christians moderately supportive, and Muslims almost unanimously opposed to legalising same sex marriage. See Francisco Perales, Gary Bouma, and Alice Campbell, “Religion, Support of Equal Rights for Same-Sex Couples and the Australian National Vote on Marriage Equality,” *Sociology of Religion*, no. doi: 10.1093/socrel/sry018 (2018): 1-23; Francisco Perales, Gary Bouma, and Alice Campbell, “Unpacking the Influence of Religion and Religiosity on Support of Equal Rights for Same-Sex Couples in Contemporary Australia” (paper presented at the AASR/NZASR Annual Conference 2017, Sydney, 8th December 2017); and especially

Christendom does not truly oppress homosexuals even if it does not condone their choices, or at least not to the same extent. It is an interesting response that shows how Christians can also be – sometimes willing (p. 96) – victims of differentiation and the lack thereof, though the dearth of examples showing Muslims as oppressors is still palpable. As if to not lose sight of the book’s true aims, the following chapter by Martha Smith Roberts resumes the ‘Muslims as victims’ narrative, and makes liberal use of liberal scholars’ buzzwords like ‘Islamophobia’ and ‘white supremacy’.

Roberts bizarrely refers to examples of Sikhs being attacked by misinformed anti-Muslim bigots in order to “highlight the double standard for non-white, non-Christian bodies” (p. 105), as if this can be extended to the American people as a whole, or the state (contrast this with Saudi government officials executing women accused of adultery). Roberts goes on to note how young Muslims often struggle with being “both American and Muslim” (p. 106), inadvertently revealing that there are indeed non-constructed differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. Roberts strangely seems to endorse these Muslims’ efforts to connect with foreign organisations, presumably so they can feel more at ease with their regressive views, and then she has the gall to complain that this “ironically” feeds the perception that these Muslims are “un-American” (p. 107). Roberts, counter-intuitively, seems to oppose the emergence of more ‘Western-compatible’ liberal Muslim groups and “state laws prohibiting shari’a or Muslim personal law” (pp. 107-108), apparently unaware that shari’a is often utilised in many Muslim-majority (and even in Western) countries to oppress women, gays, the transgendered, and religious minorities, and which could well be used to curtail her own rights.<sup>15</sup>

Her mention of the “black/white racial paradigm” (p. 108) is also

the alternate graphs Perales made available to me upon request, which revealed that, with the Christian groups lumped together as ‘Christianity’, ‘Islam’ was by far the religious group most opposed.

15 Elham Manea, *Women and Shari’a Law* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

concerning, as if East Asians and Latin people play no role; many of the latter interestingly voting for Trump.<sup>16</sup> Finally referring to claims about Obama's background, and acting as if the 'birthers' and white supremacists dominate the state (pp. 108-109), she forgets that the 'non-White' Obama was voted in as President by the mostly-White American people, and that he and his establishment colleagues have been welcoming people of colour from the developing world (and also that the 'non-White' Obama, with the help of his pro-multiculturalism colleagues, dutifully killed record numbers of innocent Muslims in the Middle East).<sup>17</sup> We scholars must be consistent. If we recognise that only a minority of Muslims are terrorists, we ought also recognise that only a minority of non-Muslim Americans are 'deplorables' who are only motivated by racism and greed.<sup>18</sup>

In another chapter directly addressing Hughes, Deeksha Sivakumar at once agrees and disagrees with Hughes' sentiments, recognising that, regarding Hinduism, the variegated "textual tradition doesn't fit neatly into the authenticity debate" (p. 113; note that Christianity and Islam also struggle with authenticity issues, despite a more emphasised textual tradition), whilst also asserting that there are 'valid' and 'invalid' religious traditions (p. 116). In his response, Ian Alexander Cuthbertson also somewhat dismisses Hughes, engaging in his own fabrication of difference by claiming a distinction between religion and superstition, as if there were no superstitious religions or religious superstitions. The final essay, by Charles McCrary, is very much in alignment with the thought of Hughes. He ends by simply asking that we consider our audiences and adapt as necessary (p. 133).

The last word goes to Ramey, in the form of an afterword, who

16 <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-probably-did-better-with-latino-voters-than-romney-did>.

17 See for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/09/america-dropped-26171-bombs-2016-obama-legacy>. In retrospect, this suggests that his earlier-awarded Nobel Peace Prize was undeserved.

18 Interestingly, the aforementioned research by Pew also reveals that a large portion of Muslims surveyed support violent actions even if they would not personally participate. That information is certainly not insignificant.

briefly mentions Trump and Bernie Sanders (p. 136), as chief rivals for the Presidency to Hillary Clinton, but passes up on the opportunity to draw attention to the latter's shameful attempt at fabricating a difference: namely, Clinton's infamous comment about Trump's supporters being 'deplorables'.<sup>19</sup> Ramey does well to acknowledge that there is diversity in minorities (p. 138), though he almost always, directly (p. 142) and indirectly (by selecting the book's contributions), employs examples of differentiation involving Muslims as the oppressed and White Westerners as oppressors. Why does the book not draw attention to the plight of women in Muslim communities or homosexuals and transgendered people in Muslim states, or remark on how early Muslims treated Jews, Christians, and Pagans during the lifetime of Muhammad?<sup>20</sup> Why not note the plight of poor Whites who are oppressed by the wealthy elites and who are still blamed for all the world's ills, or how Black South Africans – even politicians – are encouraging crimes, namely theft and murder, against White South Africans?<sup>21</sup> Ramey then objects to Trump's differentiation of Muslims, which precedes his own, on the very same page, differentiation when he highlights the second Bush/Republican Iraq war (p. 144). Like so many liberal scholars, Ramey seems to forget that establishment Democrats and Republicans are almost of one party (made more obvious with the rise of outsiders Sanders and Trump) and that the war had heavy bipartisan support. Clinton was for it, and she and Obama later destroyed Libya, which led to many of the issues – including growing religious and political tensions, refugee crises, the rise of ISIS, and the rise of the so-called 'far right' and/or alt-right – of today.<sup>22</sup> However, Ramey

19 She later acknowledged that she handed Trump a political gift. See [http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/09/10/hillary-clinton-calling-trump-supporters-deplorables-handed-him-a-political-gift\\_a\\_23203564](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2017/09/10/hillary-clinton-calling-trump-supporters-deplorables-handed-him-a-political-gift_a_23203564).

20 For example, LGBT people are routinely arrested and tortured in Saudi Arabia. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/transgender-pakistani-saudi-arabia-tortured-death-amna-meeno-11-custody-lgbt-rights-human-a7607446.html>.

21 <http://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/world-economy/bury-them-alive-white-south-africans-fear-for-their-future-as-horrific-farm-attacks-escalate/news-story/3a63389a1b0066b6b0b77522c06d6476>.

22 Additionally, rampant slavery of Africans has made a comeback in Libya. See

is correct when he explains that labels can go from merely descriptive, to prescriptive (p. 144).

Ramey also rightly claims that it is unfair to label all Trump voters as racist (p.146). Indeed, there are only a handful of major parties, often just two, not necessarily so dissimilar, and it seems unlikely that voters will agree with all of the policies of one, and none of the policies of the other. Ramey is soon back on track, however, alluding to the “arbitrary nature of the differences and similarities that individuals and groups choose to emphasize or ignore” (p. 150). There is nothing arbitrary in the gay woman’s concern that most Muslims, even in the West, have very different views about women and gays, and she may not care that it all might have to do with Western colonialism/interventionism or some such. Contrast this with the apparently ‘pinkwashed’ Republican voters who increasingly embrace the LGBT way of life; some are homosexual themselves, as with many of the Log Cabin Republicans. As is to be expected, instead of focussing on Jews and their views of the Goyim, or the Indian Muslims who wanted, and received, their own state/s (i.e. Pakistan and Bangladesh), Ramey trots out yet more ‘anti-Western’ and/or ‘pro-Islam’ examples of differentiation (pp. 153-156), though his call for scholars to avoid reinforcing the ‘public transcript’ is useful (p. 161).

*Fabricating Difference* is an interesting book that offers many useful talking points. Differentiation does happen, frequently, and scholars need to be ever wary of who is doing it, and why. Unfortunately, the book is tarnished by the sort of clear political agenda that Hughes, in his outstanding chapter, warns us about. Example after example portrays the West as evil and Muslims as victims. There are no examples of Muslims oppressing Westerners, and few of them oppressing the minorities in their own communities. There are few examples of the victimisation of those unfairly labelled as ‘Islamophobes’ or ‘far right fascists’. There is no mention of the tendency for those on the political left to label those on the right ‘undemocratic’, even though democratic elections led to

conservative governments in the US, the UK, and Australia. No one thought to point out that Saudi Arabia condemns atheists as terrorists and imprisons and even kills homosexuals.<sup>23</sup> Nobody had time to mention that Iranian Muslims force women to wear head coverings.<sup>24</sup> Not one contributor thought the entrapment of gay men by Egyptian authorities to be relevant.<sup>25</sup> And this agenda is not only clear, but mistaken, for there are clear differences in the views of (most) Muslims and (most) non-Muslims.

Especially as scholars of religion and typically secular people in general, we should find it non-arbitrary that a large proportion of Muslims around the world believe that apostates – including those Muslims that convert to Christianity – should be punished, even killed.<sup>26</sup> This is not a trivial difference and is not rendered irrelevant because of similarities like, say, desiring a better world for our descendants (and of course, ‘a better world’ is subjective, and could mean a liberal and equal society for some and a fascistic caliphate for others). Ignoring such differences won’t make the ‘fascists’ go away. Quite the opposite. If vocal liberals and progressives will not speak honestly about these issues, and will not hear the concerns of the increasingly unsilent majority, the latter will inevitably move towards the more conservative or ‘right-wing’ options; which has clearly already happened.

There is also an irony that the book calls for Muslims to be given agency, for adherents of Islam to be taken seriously, yet no polls on what Muslims actually think are appealed to. Where are the voices of the mainstream Muslims that we are supposed to be listening to? Why do they silence the very voices they ostensibly seek to encourage? Muslims

23 See, for example, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-man-sentenced-death-atheism-ahmad-al-shamri-hafar-al-batin-appeal-denied-a7703161.html>.

24 Many Iranian women are bravely protesting this. See <http://www.dw.com/en/iranian-women-defiant-against-compulsory-hijab/a-42465236>.

25 Regarding the latter, see <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-gay-apps/amid-egypts-anti-gay-crackdown-gay-dating-apps-send-tips-to-stop-entrapment-idUSKBN1CS0Z5>.

26 <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-beliefs-about-sharia>.

often tell us what it is that they think and feel, and such scholars, finding that this information does not fit their narrative, simply ignore them. It is hard not to suspect a political agenda. Most of the contributors also bewail the differentiation done by others, oblivious to their own use of the tactic. The book unfortunately engages in the very practice it warns us about. Given the subject of this collection, however, that was always going to be inevitable (akin to a book arguing that there are no absolute truths). Thankfully, other books published recently help to fill in the gaps left by *Fabricating Difference*.

## 2. REAL CONSEQUENCES

As explained above, there are real differences between cultures and religions. Mainstream Islam is very different to mainstream irreligion, mainstream Christianity, mainstream Confucianism, mainstream Jainism, and so forth. Not necessarily 'better' or 'worse', but different. One recent book that highlights some of the likely practical effects of such different beliefs and views is *Religion and Development in the Global South* by Rummy Hasan, who happens to be an ex-Muslim with a South Asian background. Hasan wastes no time, declaring in the first chapter that "The world is divided into nation-states", "each nation-state is characterised by shared ethics and norms, at least among a significant part", "Ethics and norms tend to be strongly derived from the religions of a country, region and society", and notes that "most people in the world are undoubtedly religious—and for them, religion matters" (pp. 1-2). He explains, "How religion with its attendant ethics and norms affects the economy of a polity is the subject matter of this book" (p. 2). Hasan agrees with Weber, namely that Protestant Christianity aided the economic success of the capitalist West, and wonders if other religious traditions, such as those that are anti-materialist, "discourage entrepreneurship and wealth creation" in certain developing countries (pp. 3-6). This is perhaps too simplistic, which has Hasan adding that, "economic and social development require a move to

more secular and rational values” (p. 11).<sup>27</sup>

Chapter Two focuses on Islam. Hasan reveals that no Muslim-majority country has a HDI (Human Development Index) rank higher than 30, and the countries ranking highest tend to rely on oil exports (pp. 43-45). He finds this to be a weakness in the HDI ranking, since the relatively well-rated – due almost exclusively to its oil wealth – Saudi Arabia routinely discriminates against women (and many other disadvantaged groups) and exploits migrant workers (p. 45). Hasan finds it curious that intellectuals are happy to report on the failings of Muslim-majority countries, though without “directly dwelling on the role played by Islam” (p. 49). He rejects the notion that colonialism is to blame, since “the Islamic world had been stagnant centuries before the colonial powers arrived” (p. 50). Hasan looks to Islamic theology, finding several Quranic passages that seem to discourage scientific thinking (p. 53). Of particular interest is his citing of a paper by Timur Kuran, who examined “the reasons for the economic ascent of religious minorities (notably Christians and Jews) under Muslim rule, locating the core reason as residing in their ability to opt out of Islamic laws” (p. 58). The role of Islam during the ‘Muslim Golden Age’ is downplayed, as is becoming increasingly common, utilising Rodney Stark’s argument that “to the extent that Muslim elites acquired a sophisticated culture, they acquired it from their subject peoples” (p. 61). Hasan correctly adds that “the major thinkers of the Islamic “golden age” were, in fact, Muslim heretics (or, more accurately, free thinkers) and invariably hostile to religion” (p. 62). Hasan believes that the Muslim world is relatively uninterested in the progresses made outside it, noting “that Spain [itself not the greatest example of a successful nation] translates more books in a single year than the entire Arab world has in the past *thousand years*” (p. 64). Hasan largely blames many Muslims’

27 It is worth noting that it is likely that the Protestant Reformation made the West more conducive to secular and pluralistic thinking. A thorough resource on this is Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012). Also consider that the productivity of many Muslims may be affected by the many disruptions to work caused by prayer and fasting.

insistence on Quranic literalism, reasoning that “Orwellian typology (from his 1984) is most apposite here: any viewpoint that is critical of Islamic doctrines and practices is deemed a “thought crime” and is prevented by a most complete indoctrination from a very young age” (p. 66). Hasan also raises the effect of Islam’s five pillars, opining that “the undertaking of prayers has a significant, deleterious, effect on aggregate output and efficiency” and cites “mounting evidence to show that fasting in the month of Ramadan has a negative effect on health which, in turn, has an adverse impact on productivity and economic output” (pp. 67-72).

Hasan also has much to say about regions of the world where Hinduism, Confucianism, and Catholicism dominate, but that lies outside the scope of this essay.

### 3. REAL DIVERSITY

While many academics may feel compelled to deny – even despite the evidence – that there are real differences between various groups (without which there would not actually be real diversity), such as mainstream Muslims and non-Muslims, people outside the Academy typically have more freedom in expressing their views and voicing their concerns. Working against the tendency to blame the world’s ills, including the oppression of Muslims and ‘Islamophobia’, on White supremacy are many of the laypersons portrayed in John Safran’s equally hilarious and thought-provoking *Depends What You Mean by Extremist*. While much of the focus, and no doubt intent, was to mock ‘far-right’ or ‘anti-Islam’ groups such as the United Patriots Front, and to ridicule extremists in general, the book highlights something that is perhaps unexpected about the ‘anti-Islam movement’, which is all too happy to ‘fabricate the difference’ that Muslims are somehow different: it is an incredibly diverse ‘rainbow coalition’. It does not take long for Safran to note that around half of the ‘Islamophobes’ at a Reclaim Australia protest were non-White, with ethnic Jews among their ranks (pp. 3, 6), and he recalls

how he witnessed the unsettling scenario of White ‘pro-Muslims’ trying to silence a non-White, ‘anti-Muslim’ immigrant (p. 12).

Page after page, Safran introduces readers to individuals that disrupt the mainstream narratives. He introduces us to the fiercely pro-Western and pro-Jewish Danny Nalliah, who hails from Sri Lanka, and wishes for Australia to be multiracial, but not multicultural (pp. 2-8), and whose Christian church claims members of many races; the half Italian migrant and half Aboriginal Ralph Cerminara, who has an Asian wife, ends up as left wing on political quizzes, and laments that so much more is supposedly done for Muslim migrants entering Australia than its traditional owners (pp. 23-27); the White Muslim ‘extremist’ who complains about racism in the Middle East and ‘admits’ that Muslims and the left-wingers who defend them have different goals (pp. 30-31); the Sufi Muslim who justifies the killing of non-Muslims (p. 43); the White ‘anti-racists’ trying to suppress the voices of turban-wearing Indian ‘Islamophobes’ (pp. 60-61); the ‘Islamophobes’ opposed to racism, sexism, and Nazism (p. 75); the Arabic UPF supporter who argues with a White Islamophile who believes that love can overcome all (p. 80); the apparently liberal Indonesian Muslim who parties with UPF members (pp. 88-90); the Aboriginal woman lambasting an Aboriginal man for converting to Islam (pp. 103-104); the Pacific Islanders who oppose Islam (p. 123); the Muslim at a mosque open day casually spreading anti-Semitic hate and conspiracy theories (p. 134); the UPF member who rejected the chance to kill Muslims in Afghanistan (pp. 135-137); the left-wing woman who did not care about a right-wing female victim of domestic violence (p. 167); the left-wing people tolerating Muslim hate crimes against Jews (pp. 182-187); the obvious but little-mentioned racism of many Jews who see themselves as part of a ‘master race’ (p. 191); the Muslim abusing the author for being an ethnic Jew (p. 155); the White-skinned multiculturalist (Safran himself) who was ‘proud’ to let some Black-on-White violence happen, though he could have prevented it (p. 180); the man who hates

Lebanese culture, though he is of Lebanese extraction (p. 205); the Palestinian Australians harbouring ill will against Jewish Australians (p. 209); the Islamist who does not feel oppressed in Australia (p. 214); the multi-ethnic supporters of Christian and nationalistic politician Fred Nile (p. 238); the Muslims who oppose homosexuality (p. 239); and the socialists who were pleased with a Trump win, because it signifies that the establishment can be beaten and that important issues are coming to the fore (p. 275).

Safran also delights in highlighting hypocrisies, such as leftists using classist terms such as 'bogan' (p. 59), and notes that a major news network chose not to air an interview with Danny Nalliah, though he is a Person of Colour (perhaps because of his 'Islamophobia', or worse, the notion that opposition to Islam is not limited to far-right White Westerners) (p. 196). He also recognises the curious situation where certain left-wing figures are happy to justify 'non-structural' 'left-wing violence', but perceive merely engaging with right-wing people in conversations to be the greater crime (p. 159). Furthermore, in an interview, Safran says that the 'anti-Islam movement' has been whitewashed and claims that "There's a lot of people who have horrible experiences overseas and so that's why they become part of the anti-Islam movement. Even former Muslims who've left."<sup>28</sup> He adds that Hindu gripes with Islam "goes back way further – hundreds of years – further than Pauline Hanson or the United Patriots Front" and ends by noting, "I think our right-wing parties ARE multicultural and I think it's useful to swallow the medicine and acknowledge that that's how it is, instead of having this facile analysis that it's just white people vs brown people. It's messier than that."

The points that non-Muslims who other Muslims may be non-White/non-Western and that Muslims also dabble in othering is well made, and space is limited here, so I shall refrain from discussing the so-called 'Islamophobia' of Muslim reformers such as Maajid Nawaz, Mohammad

28 <https://www.sbs.com.au/comedy/article/2016/06/23/john-safran-says-were-white-washing-anti-islam-movement-australia>.

Tawhidi, and Asra Nomani (who voted for Trump).

#### 4. REAL NERVE

While it may often not be appropriate for scholars to be *prescriptive*, they should always be at liberty to be *descriptive*. They should be able to observe the differences between cultures and religions, and objectively report on them. This brings to mind the book *Failure and Nerve*, and the great Don Wiebe, who charged that “the academic study of religion suffers from a failure of intellectual nerve”; the editors and many of the contributors sharing “the view that conceptualizing religion as an element of the mundane world of human doings is the first requirement of a public inquiry into the history and function of religion” (p. vii). Interestingly, in the first chapter proper Matthew Day takes an opposing view, strangely finding it unimportant whether religious stories are “*true, false, or an outright lie*” (pp. 39-41). With friends like these, who needs enemies like Trump and his – increasingly reasonable – accusations of ‘fake news’? More agreeable contributions follow, with highlights coming from the amusingly assertive Russell McCutcheon, who finds ‘crypto-theologians’ to be uncritical and ignorant (pp. 78-79), and Johannes Wolfart, who claims that, “practitioners of Religious Studies still habitually suspect each other of hidden agendas” (p. 102).

More relevant to this review essay’s theme, Herbert Berg recognises that crypto-theology pervades Islamic studies, even though many scholars of Islam are secular (p. 112). Berg wonders if the common focus on Sufism, as the “nice face of Islam”, is due to some political bias (p. 114). I can personally attest to this phenomenon. In an introductory unit on religion that I contributed some lectures to, three hours was dedicated to Islam. One hour discussed the life of Muhammad; one hour focused on the Rashidun Caliphate; and one hour was dedicated to Sufism, despite

its minority status within Islamdom.<sup>29</sup> No time was dedicated to the beliefs and practices of mainstream Muslims today, or Islam's role in contemporary geopolitics, and little time was spent on the murky origins of the Quran, despite much of the time devoted to Christianity being spent on mainstream – and even radical – Biblical criticism. Berg also points out that revisionism should not necessarily be considered rude or racist (pp. 117-119). In his chapter, the now familiar Aaron Hughes effectively concurs with Berg, noting that many scholars of Islam tend to think that the forms of Islam “practiced by the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, Wahhabi and neo-Wahhabi groups – are somehow inauthentic precisely because they stray from a pure, divine, and revealed original message” (pp. 142-143). Hughes goes on to accuse many scholars of Islam of preferring a ‘confessional’ approach (p. 144). In any case, the message of *Failure and Nerve* is clear: critiquing Islam and critiquing religion in general is perfectly respectable, and is even necessary if Religious Studies is going to be truly objective and scientific.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All of these books offered food for thought. I wish to clarify that I do not in this essay wish to judge religions and cultures as being right or wrong, morally good or evil. I find it unhelpful to think of Western culture as superior or inferior to non-Western cultures, or Muslims as more or less scrupulous than non-Muslims. Unencumbered by such notions, I only wish to speak in terms of ‘pragmatics’<sup>30</sup> and ‘preferences’.<sup>31</sup> Different peoples believe different things, and, accordingly, perform different actions. These different actions will produce different outcomes. Some

29 <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-1-religious-affiliation>.

30 Or ‘practicalities’.

31 To be transparent, I personally prefer ‘progressive’ values and individual rights. I find many Muslims’ thoughts on women, LGBT people, minorities, and people of other religions (and non-religions), to be utterly reprehensible.

people will find certain outcomes desirous, and others may find the same outcomes to be appalling. Therefore, people express preferences about these outcomes, and ponder whether they could and should influence them, such as, in democracies, utilising their right to vote.

Like the many brave contributors to *Failure and Nerve*, scholars and laypersons alike ought to be able to comfortably consider the differences between various peoples, and to express any opinions about their preferences regarding them. Differentiation is not always fallacious and/or immoral. No one should be privileged so as to be immune from this process, which already happens ubiquitously, in various ways. Not even Muslims. If Muslims tell us that they believe things that are typically considered reprehensible in the West, we should not ignore them, and we should have honest discussions about the likely effects of multiculturalism, immigration, and related issues.

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**Book Reviews**



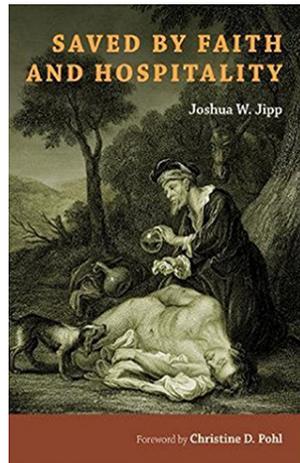


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## Book Reviews

Joshua Jipp.  
*Saved by Faith and Hospitality*  
Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B.  
Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2017,  
220 pp. £13.98.  
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7505-1.

Reviewed by, Anthony Royle,  
Tutor at King's Evangelical  
Divinity School



Joshua Jipp is an assistant professor of New Testament studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Jipp credits his interest in the subject of hospitality to his engagement with Greco-Roman customs during his doctoral studies. This research led to the publication of *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10* (NovTSup 153, Leiden: Brill, 2013). In *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* Jipp has provided

a more accessible book for biblical scholars and serious lay people to not only demonstrate hospitality as a key biblical theological concept, but also provoke readers to consider the application to society in North America. Each chapter concludes with a series of questions that help readers consider the subject matter at greater lengths. The book is also ideal for small groups and perhaps even an undergraduate seminar class.

The title stems from Clement of Rome's first epistle to the Corinthians where the author exhorts his readers to show hospitality. The author of 1 Clement uses Abraham, Lot, and Rahab as examples of hospitality to strangers that resulted in blessing and salvation. Jipp is aware that the provocative title may be controversial to those who hold the view of *Sola fide* (xii); however, he places the words of Clement alongside James who wrote that Abraham was justified by faith and works (p. 5). Jipp's thesis is not a theological treatise between the faith/works paradigm, but rather it is a thorough demonstration that biblical faith expresses itself by showing hospitality to the other. The challenge Jipp raises in the book is: to be inhospitable with tribalism and xenophobia is unchristian (p. 9).

The book is divided into two sections; Divine Hospitality and Human Hospitality. This flows from the concept that human hospitality derives from divine hospitality. God demonstrated his love to those who were far off (strangers) by invitation of His Son, therefore, Christians must imitate God's hospitality to others. The early chapters provide interpretations of biblical texts where Jesus bestowed hospitality to those who were social outcasts and were invited into the Kingdom of God. Later chapters challenge Christians in North America to implement these principles locally and globally.

Part one begins with explaining Jesus's fulfillment of Isaiah 4:18-19, "the year of the Lord's dektos (welcome)" through His hospitality and shared meal time with sinners (pp. 19-22). One of Jipp's strengths in the book is connecting Isaiah's prophetic vision with Jesus's ministry of inviting

the orphan, widow, and alien into the Kingdom of God. Jesus is depicted as subverting stereotypes and embracing stigma. The book continues to follow the Luke-Acts narrative and highlights that the same approach was practiced by the early church, especially through their hospitality at the Lord's Table where the breaking of bread pushed social boundaries between Jew and Greek and rich and poor. Jipp explains that he is not arguing for the absence of boundaries or limitations to hospitality. He concedes that the Scriptures call for moral boundaries (1 Cor. 5:1-8, 6:12-20; 2 John 1:7-11) and commendably states that the Christian should not compromise their allegiance to Christ or water down the message (p. 40). Furthermore, Jipp notes that Paul had an open table policy but forbade in sharing in sacrifices to other deities and sexual relations with cultic prostitutes (p114). Unfortunately, Jipp is hazy in his distinction of moral and social boundaries, especially in regards to hospitality towards transgendered people (p. 39).

In this book, Jipp acknowledges that sin separates human beings from God and that God has made a way through showing hospitality through His Son's death and resurrection to have fellowship with Him (p. 35); however, the need for repentance, which is a key component of God's invitation, is absent from Jipp's analysis of Jesus's ministry. One may argue that the acceptance of the invitation implicitly demonstrates repentance; however, as illustrated in Jesus's parable of the Wedding banquet, there are those who accepted the invitation, but did not wear the right clothes and were expelled (Matthew 22:11-14). Evidently enough this parable does not feature in this book, nor does the Matthean invitation to "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2, 4:17), or the Johannine instruction to "go and sin no more" (John 5:14, 8:11). Jipp may recognise the problem between sin and hospitality; however, he does not call for the other to change.

Part two questions how the church and the individual Christian should engage with others. These three chapters focus on the attitude of tribalism (against those of other faiths), xenophobia, and economic greed.

Jipp's premise is that the Christian is the stranger, the guest, and should play this role humbly when encountering people in order to win them to Christ (p. 99). He argues that placing ourselves in the position of host we are in danger of being condescending in helping others and may see those in need as inferior to us in some way (ibid). Jipp provides some social commentary to areas he argues North America is failing and provides approaches he contends are more biblical. The arguments and proposals provided will divide opinions in the current polarised American political climate. The tension in some of these issues is between the American Christians desire to be an American host, wanting to preserve their identity, borders, values, and fellow citizens and also a Christian pilgrim who must love their neighbour and enemy in a sacrificial way. This juxtaposition is not viewed as two equally valid moral equivalents wrestling in application; rather, Jipp claims the tension as deriving from misinformation and fear by "poor analysis" and "use of low quality data" (p. 125) on issues such as immigration and the economy.

Jipp seeks to provoke Christians to think about legal justice and oppression of the vulnerable people caught in a system and provides some practical guidance on how Christians can be actively involved in helping them; however, it is surprising that Jipp neglects to raise the issue of abortion considering that approximately one million terminations occur every year in America. The vivid picture of a mother/host and unborn child as guest provides a beautiful illustration that would enhance Jipp's thesis. The absence of this issue limits the scope of the book and calls into question why some issues are preferred over others.

Jipp is aware of the controversial nature of his political discourse, especially his views on illegal immigrants and re-offending criminals, as he states in his epilogue that some will not be convinced (p. 177). This is not because Christians do not accept that the Scriptures exhort hospitality to the stranger, but rather because the application and extent of that hospitality is often ambiguous. The application of hospitality is not as straightforward as suggested. The final three chapters would benefit

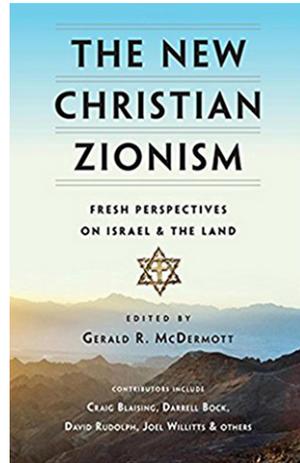
from looking at alternative scenarios while comparing the positives and negatives for a thorough analysis of the scope of hospitality and its application in the modern world.

*Saved by Faith and Hospitality* is a compelling argument for the importance of hospitality to the Christian faith. Although I question some of his application to the modern world, I believe this book is an excellent exhortation to the Church to reach out to the other. There is certainly room for discussion on the issues raised and I am thankful that Jipp has brought them to the attention of Christians today.

Gerald R. McDermott (editor).  
*The New Christian Zionism:  
Fresh Perspectives on Israel  
and the Land*

Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016.  
(349 pages).

**Reviewed by, Mitch Glaser,  
Seventh President of  
Chosen People Ministries**



**The New Christian Zionism, edited by Dr. Gerry McDermott, provides a new and needed approach to the current theological controversies swirling round Israel in the Bible and as a modern nation. The genesis for the book is biblical and yet the chapters also cover some of the more difficult issues related to the current Middle East crisis and especially the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.**

The 349 pages, include chapters by well known Christian scholars and Messianic Jews who touch on some of the major points of the controversy

including the hermeneutics needed to read the Biblical material, the history of Christian Zionism, Zionism in the New Testament, and the theology and politics of the anti Christian Zionism movement.

Gerald McDermott's introductory material is excellent as he both defines and traces the history of Christian Zionism for the reader who might have little experience with the topic. McDermott assures the reader that a theology that includes ethnic Israel and the land in God's story found in Scripture is not particular to any Christian denomination.

Christian Zionism is bigger than any denomination, theological tradition or period. It focuses on the character of God and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Those at the start of the Christian faith argued that God will keep his promises to Israel. This confidence also provides a basis for assurance about his promises to us. Those promises point to a reconciliation God has worked through his Messiah for the life and the Shalom of the world.<sup>1</sup>

McDermott explains what he means by the new Christian Zionism,

So what do the scholars and experts in this book mean by “the New Christian Zionism”? The best answer to this question, we think, is the rest of the book. This introduction will telegraph, as it were, the basic implications of what we mean by this term. The first is that the people and land of Israel are central to the story of the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

He continues,

The burden of these chapters is to show theologically that the people of Israel continue to be significant for the history of redemption and that the land of Israel, which is at the heart of the covenantal promises, continues to be important to God's providential purposes.<sup>3</sup>

1 Gerald R McDermott, *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land*, 2016, 317.

2 *Ibid.*, 11.

3 *Ibid.*, 13.

And further,

We are also convinced that the return of Jews from all over the world to their land, and their efforts to establish a nation-state after two millennia of being separated from controlling the land, is part of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Further, we believe that Jews need and deserve a homeland in Israel— not to displace others but to accept and develop what the family of nations— the United Nations— ratified in 1948. We would add that this startling event climaxed a history of continual Jewish presence in the land going back at least three thousand years.<sup>4</sup>

McDermott readily admits he has a prejudice against the more traditional Dispensational or as he would describe an older version of Christian Zionism that he believes is not relevant for today. McDermott writes,

This book has tried to unfold a new vision for the relationship between the church and Israel. It has argued that the old Christian Zionism was married to premillennial dispensationalism— for better or for worse. Traditional dispensationalists exhibited a certain theological ingenuity that rightly insisted, against many cultured despisers, that God's covenant with Israel had not been severed. They were right about that. But we are proposing a New Christian Zionism that departs from traditional dispensationalism in some important ways, as I have already explained in the introduction. Now it is time to think about what difference this new approach to Israel and the church might make.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that the tone with which he jettisons his Christian Zionist forefathers who expressed their hope in the future of Israel in the theological terms available to them in that day is stronger than necessary. In fact, the very name of the book is indicative of McDermott's attempts to break with the past. It would have been more helpful to point out the weaknesses of the position without borderline disparaging the Dispensational pioneers who blazed the path upon which McDermott and his co-authors now

4 Ibid., 12.

5 Ibid., 319.

journey.

In fact, from the above statements it would seem that McDermott sounds very much like an “old fashioned” Christian Zionist with more Dispensational theological leanings. Certainly McDermott and many of his authors would not fit into the Dispensational mode, but they would find agreement with those who have gone before in their understanding of God’s ongoing plan for Israel and the Jewish people, which includes the divine deed to the Land of promise.

The care with which McDermott chose his authors is evident from the quality of their work. I especially appreciated the denominational analysis of those Christian groups that have taken up the mantle of anti Christian Zionism written by Mark Tooley. Robert Nicholson’s chapter examining the legal issues of the controversy is superb, especially his section where he appraises the moral equivalency arguments of those who believe that the nation of Israel does not deserve the land because of their behavior towards the Palestinian community in Israel.

Dr. Blaising, who has written on these topics previously and reflects a progressive version of Dispensationalism in his chapter, grapples with some of the more challenging hermeneutical issues at the heart of the conflict. Commenting on the argument that the “fulfillment citations” in Matthew write ethnic Israel out of the divine story, he writes,

But the claim that Matthew is thereby teaching that Israel’s identity as an ethnic, national, territorial reality is ending as such and being replaced by the singular person of the Christ and/or a new mixed corporate body to be created by him reads too much into the text. It belongs to an anti-Semitic, anti Judaic interpretation of Matthew that is generally rejected today.<sup>6</sup>

Bock summarizes the new Christian Zionism position by simply stating,

In this book we have presented an outline of a case for Israel as a nation in the land. That case is theological, moral, historical,

6 Ibid., 84.

biblical, political, and legal. But this book has put its greatest emphasis on the biblical and theological case to be made. The writers are convinced that this story needs to be heard. They believe that Christian Zionism is not an oxymoron. We are convinced it is a sound humanitarian and theological position.<sup>7</sup>

Bock continues,

As we look to make the case as Christians that Israel has a right to the land, we also tell Christian Zionism is bigger than any denomination, theological tradition or period. It focuses on the character of God and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Those at the start of the Christian faith argued that God will keep his promises to Israel. This confidence also provides a basis for assurance about his promises to us. Those promises point to a reconciliation God has worked through his Messiah for the life and the shalom of the world.<sup>8</sup>

## CONCLUSION

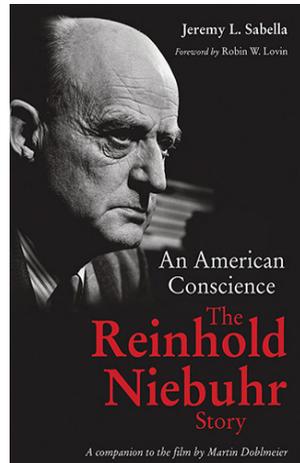
We are grateful for the vision of Gerald McDermott in undertaking this project. Additionally we applaud the courage of Intervarsity Press who for the longest time has published books on Israel written by Stephen Sizer and others who take an extreme anti Christian Zionist and anti Israel position. The dialogue has now been balanced with the publishing of a *The New Christian Zionism*. We look forward to additional volumes addressing these significant issues that are both biblical and geopolitical in nature. We live in a complex and challenging world where we must apply Scripture to every area of life, including the Middle East conflict. *The New Christian Zionism* is a good beginning to a new day of discussion. Most of all, we hope that this new book will inspire Christians to pray for the peace of Jerusalem as the Psalmist encourages us to do in Psalm 122:6.

7 Ibid., 316–17.

8 Ibid.

Jeremy L. Sabella.  
*An American Conscience: The  
Reinhold Niebuhr Story*  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017.  
Pbk, xvi, 155.  
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7527-3. \$19.99.

Reviewed by, Daniel Salyers.  
PhD Candidate, Fuller  
Theological Seminary



Twentieth-century America endured many monumental shifts and developments within society, politics, and religion. Reinhold Niebuhr served as a guiding voice throughout his life. Jeremy Sabella's work seeks to demonstrate how Niebuhr's theology and politics often functioned as the true "American Conscience," guiding major thinkers of Niebuhr's own time and shaping future leaders within society. Sabella's work serves as a companion text to a recent (2016) documentary film with the same title, directed by renowned documentarian Martin Doblmeier (p. x). The film interviewed prominent figures for their opinions on thought and influence of Reinhold Niebuhr. Sabella assembles his text on Niebuhr in conversation with the transcripts of interviews used for the film, and consequently benefits from the incorporation of so many unique perspectives.

Sabella structures his volume by breaking down Niebuhr's years of influence into five separate chapters, each seeking to analyze a given epoch of Niebuhr's career. The first chapter opens with an analysis of Niebuhr the pastor, examining his thirteen years serving at the Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit from 1915-1928. Here the reader sees Niebuhr emerging

onto the national stage, largely through his criticisms of automaker Henry Ford's labor practices (pp. 3-4, 16). Niebuhr's support of the American cause in World War I further elevated his platform within the American religious landscape. The chapter also covers Niebuhr's relocation to New York City as he began serving as a professor of ethics at Union Theological Seminary in 1928, from which he published his first major book, *Moral Man and the Immoral Society* in 1932, which firmly cemented himself as one of the leading theological voices in America. The transition from pastor to academic thus guides chapter one.

Sabella's second chapter frames Niebuhr's continued rise to national prominence around several key contributions to American life during the Great Depression, as well as during the beginning of World War II. The foundations of Niebuhr's future position as "the establishment theologian" are well-established by Sabella in chapter two. Sabella points to the "Serenity Prayer," possibly Niebuhr's most commonly-known contribution among American life, his interactions at Union with theological giants Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich, and to several additional books written in the 1930s and 1940s to underscore how prolific and impactful these years were to Niebuhr's career.

The third chapter describes Niebuhr's contributions during World War II, as well as in the half-decade after the war. Sabella highlights Niebuhr's work *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944), which embodied his Christian realist viewpoint in examining the world (p. 68). The fourth chapter analyzes his influence throughout the 1950s, and his attempts to understand his own theology in light of the advent of the nuclear age. Sabella's analysis in chapter four emphasizes Niebuhr's *The Irony of American History* (1952), as well as his life-changing stroke, which forced him to slow down his torrid pace. As a result, Niebuhr was able to strike up a profound friendship with Jewish intellectual, Abraham Joshua Heschel—an important interfaith development at the time (pp. 102-3). In the 1950s, Niebuhr also interacted with major religious figures like Billy Graham and John Courtney Murray. The final chapter, the fifth, concludes

the book with a discussion of Niebuhr's legacy in the latter half of the twentieth century, and on into the twenty-first, drawing heavily on many of the interviewees.

I found the book to be a very helpful overview of the career of one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the twentieth century. By covering such a prominent and long-lasting career at the center of American theology and politics, Sabella has given his readers a strong glimpse of Niebuhr's legacy and impact on twentieth-century thought. Due to the brevity of the text, Sabella is unable to truly dive deeply into the nuance and development of each of Niebuhr's theological constructs. Nevertheless, Sabella often succeeds at succinctly explaining a complicated topic in order for readers to focus on Niebuhr's contributions as opposed to bogging the reader down with protracted explanations of theological concepts.

Sabella's book also helpfully utilizes many of Niebuhr's prominent works as signposts for the reader in order to summarize key developments and shifts in his thinking and worldview. But the true gift of the book comes from the insights and reflections by the prestigious interviewees. Sabella's access to the transcripts of the interviews allows him to frame his arguments with reflections by some of the most famous intellectuals of the twentieth century, even including former President Jimmy Carter. Likewise, Reinhold Niebuhr's daughter, Elisabeth Sifton, provides excellent insights and personal reflections throughout the book regarding who Niebuhr was as a father.

While Sabella's work succeeds in providing an overarching view of Reinhold Niebuhr's contributions to American theology, politics, and social ideologies, it unfortunately tends to read Niebuhr's later positions and thinking back into his early works. For example, Sabella often will view developments in Niebuhr's thought with the perspective of hindsight, such as noting how Niebuhr was a pacifist in the aftermath of World War I but would change his mind later during World War II (p. 10). While revisionist readings of Niebuhr's early thoughts and positions

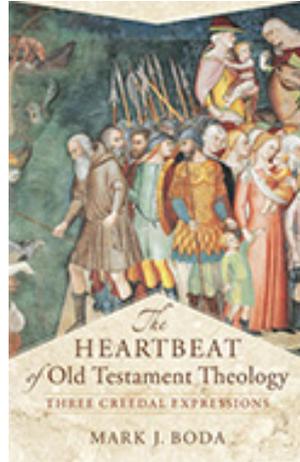
help to understand that he did not always ascribe to specific tenets such as pacifism, it also unfortunately shapes the ways in which the reader might encounter the “early Niebuhr.”

As mentioned above, the impact of the book lies in the access to interviewees and their testimonies to Niebuhr’s thought and influence upon their own communities and their own lives; however, the final chapter, chapter five, claims to “place the voices of our interviewees in conversation with one another” (p. 117). Unfortunately, Sabella does not entirely deliver on the promise. Chapter five sees the interviewees and their testimonies on given topics more or less as support for Sabella’s own assertions and synopses of Niebuhr’s legacy. Perhaps it would have been more exciting to hear lengthier responses by the interviewees in lieu of Sabella’s own, informed arguments on Niebuhr’s impact upon theology and politics in twentieth-century America. Intriguingly, Sabella also highlights feminist scholars’ critiques of Niebuhr’s concepts of power, due to the fact that women have traditionally been excluded from positions of power (p.132). However, Sabella is quick to react to these critiques and others from scholars of race, by noting that “neither critique undermines the underlying logic of Niebuhr’s ethic” (p.134). Sabella instead could have let these critiques stand on their own, forcing the reader to decide for him or herself.

Despite these minor issues, the book remains a helpful introduction for new Niebuhr enthusiasts, or a helpful summary text for veteran Niebuhr fans. Sabella’s incorporation of the reflections of people who knew Niebuhr well, including his own daughter, and those intellectuals who later would shape the theological landscape of American Christianity gives readers a new text that provides an understanding of how Niebuhr directly contributed to many people in many ways.

Boda, Mark J.  
*The Heartbeat of  
Old Testament Theology:  
Three Creedal Expressions.*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker  
Academic, a division of Baker  
Publishing Group, 2017.  
ISBN 9780801030895.

Reviewed by, Corey D. Wilson,  
Lancaster Bible College,  
Capital Seminary &  
Graduate School



In Mark Boda's, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, he discusses three creedal expressions found in the Old Testament (OT) which are revisited in the New Testament (NT). He defines them as the narrative expression, the character expression and the relational expression (p. 8). He contends that each expression is at the core of OT theology and is key to understanding it. Boda treats each theological expression as a theological heartbeat and argues how each expression runs parallel throughout scripture.

Before discussing these expressions, Boda briefly shares the history of OT theology. He mentions how Walther Eichrodt, Gerhard von Rad, Brevard Childs and Phyllis Tribble were key contributors to the various ways OT theology was studied in biblical scholarship (p. 3). The method Boda uses to examine this topic is an intertextual- canonical approach that centers on the self-revelation of God (p. 7). This method focuses on the arrangement of repeated ideas and concepts found in scripture. Boda uses this approach to examine each creedal expression to show how their cohesiveness is integrated in both the Old and New Testament. In the first

creedal expression, the narrative rhythm, he mentions how God is a God of redemption through actions in the past. To show how this came to be, Boda examined the OT theology of George Ernest Wright. He agrees with Wright's view of OT theology as a declaration of God's redemptive acts (p. 10). Boda asserts that the mighty acts of God are at the heart of OT theology. He believes that revelation is given through these acts.

Boda states that Barth and Rad argue how the narrative rhythm is a reoccurring theme in various parts of scripture such as hymns and prayers located in the Psalms. From here, Boda highlights the different elements that support the narrative expression. He notes how elements of the narrative creed are seen through the election of the patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, the Exodus narrative, the conquests of Canaan and its land and Israel's expulsion from the Promised Land (p.15). He references several texts to support how God's acts of redemption are seen in the past. For example, in Deut 6:21-23, he mentions how God's acts of redemption can be witnessed when He delivered Israel from Egypt so that He could then direct them to the Promised Land. Boda does an excellent job stating his case for God's acts of redemption as one of the creedal expressions found in the OT. Boda shows this relevance by zeroing in on the term *יצא* (bringing out) and *בוא* (bringing in). This narrative creed demonstrates God's acts of redemption by rescuing Israel and preparing to establish their new position in Canaan as He gives them the law (p.16). Boda ends by mentioning that the function of the narrative creed is to reveal more about the self-existing God (pp. 23-24).

The second creedal expression that Boda details is the character creed. In this theological expression, he focuses on the nature and the attributes of God. Boda points to the elements of the nonperfective and nonpreterite verbal forms along with the adjectives and the nouns used to describe God and His activity (p.29). One of the examples he gives is found in Ex 34:6-7, where the Character Creed is revealed in the opening verse with the declaration of Yahweh. Boda mentions that Moses' statement echoes his conversation with the Lord during the gold calf incident. This ultimately

sets the stage for God to reveal Himself to Moses, thus revealing His attributes to him. Boda continues to explain how this expression is further developed in Ex 33:1-35. From here he highlights the core characteristics of God found in Ex 33. He mentions how God's steadfast love and justice is at the center of the Character Creed. Boda goes into detail about how this word אָהֳבָה (steadfast love) is repeated in an ontological and functional way to describe the character of God (p. 38). He demonstrates the differences between how this word is used in the Hebrew and in the Greek translation. In addition, Boda states how God's steadfast love and truth are seen throughout the OT and provides several references to show its use. The function of this expression is seen in repentance; forgiveness and prayer just to name a few. Boda makes a strong case for the Character Creed in presenting this expression. There is a focus in the OT on the nature and character of God, which can also be seen in the NT.

The third OT creedal expression Boda emphasizes is the Relational Creed. He notes how Eichrodt advocated for its use in OT theology and how many scholars view this creed as one that fits well into the framework of Biblical Theology (p. 54). Boda states that the elements of this creed center on the statement I am/you are, I will be/you will be, He is/they are (p. 55). He views God in this expression more as a Father figure and that humanity has a bigger role to play within this creed. He touches on the reciprocity of God and His people, their identity, and their responsibilities. Boda indicates that these are the foundational elements of the Relational Creed. He gives an example of this in Gen 12 as God makes a series of promises to Abraham. He also highlights the idea of the new covenant and its role in this expression. Boda mentions that its function is to solidify the relationship between God and His people. In addition to this, Boda comments that this creed's focus is on humanity. However, in reviewing this section, the relational creed is not only about humanity, but also about the God of humanity since every relationship requires the involvement of two willing parties. One recommendation would be that on page 33 at the end of the first paragraph the word "His" should be added between the

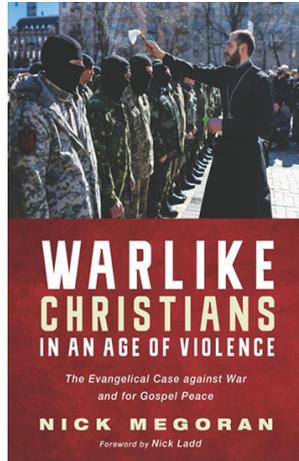
word “renewing” and “covenant.” This addition would add cohesiveness to the last sentence in this paragraph.

Overall, Boda’s presentation of *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* is a beneficial piece of literature for biblical scholars and graduate students. I agree with his assessment of each expression and appreciate his clarity in describing how they occur in both the OT and NT. Each description of the various expressions revealed how much one can gain from understanding the God found in the narrative of scripture, His character and how He relates to His people. Boda’s theological presentation of each expression was well written and accurately demonstrated biblically truths that are seen in scripture from beginning to end. He educates the readership on how the God of the Bible is a God whose acts are demonstrated throughout the history of mankind, whose character is revealed so that all may know Him and that He is a God who relates to His people. Each expression Boda describes in this book will enhance the body of Christ’s understanding about the God that saved them, and should propel them to want to know Him more intimately.

Nick Megoran.  
*Warlike Christians in an Age of  
Violence: The Evangelical Case  
Against War and for  
the Gospel of Peace*

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.  
Ix-308. ISBN : 978-1498219594.

Reviewed by  
Stephen M. Vantassel,  
King's Evangelical  
Divinity School



Nick Megoran is another voice in the large chorus of Christians who believe that participation in war is incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Quite simply, Megoran believes that war is sin (p.xii) and the notion that Christians can be involved in war, including so-called Just Wars, stems from the church's adoption of secular/pagan thinking. Unsurprisingly, Megoran bases his belief on the Sermon on the Mount, Apostolic teaching about the Gospel of Peace, and the behavior of the pre-Constantinian church. But the author's position cannot simply be dismissed as that of an idealistic pacifist. Megoran contends that pacifism errs by having too much faith in man. Conversely, the philosophy of non-violence has too much faith in the role of political strategies characteristic of social action. Instead, Megoran believes that Christ calls believers to a deeper mission, namely the Gospel; that transformative power which can change a person's values from hate to love, from bitterness to forgiveness, from estrangement to reconciliation.

Before discussing how Christians should wage peace, Megoran wants to

clear away what he thinks are improper justifications for war. He contends that Christians cannot use the Old Testament to justify war because 1) the Church has replaced Israel and 2) Old Testament war (when it was justifiable) was used to establish holiness not expand economic power or international justice. In chapter 3, Megoran addresses numerous New Testament passages used to support Christian participation in war. He appeals to historical background, literary context, and theological analysis to undermine the claims of the pro-war view.

The next two chapters delve into Christian tradition regarding war. Megoran strenuously argues that the early church was decidedly against participation in war. While providing references to early church fathers, Megoran's sparse use of primary literature led me to ask whether Megoran missed some contradictory data or alternative assessments of his view of the early church. Though not a trained theologian, he has academic training and clearly understands the principles of good research. I just wonder whether the volume and diversity of data got the better of him here.

Megoran hits a stride when dealing with the Medieval and modern church's support for violence as codified by Just War Theory. He believes that the church's adoption of Just War theory came from Church leaders embrace of class privilege, a desire to be politically relevant, wanting to see evil defeated, and adoption of the belief that war was inevitable. Megoran excoriates Just War theory as a viable ethical theory because of its contradictions and lack of assistance in making objective decisions. The arguments made here are not new. The question, however, that Megoran does not ask is whether the principles of Just War theory can have a heuristic role to help national leaders determine whether war making is justifiable. I suspect that Just War Theory has helped prevent far more wars than Megoran would acknowledge.

Perhaps the most controversial section of the book is the two chapters Megoran uses to discuss the thorny question of "What about Hitler?" World War II is often heralded as a "moral war." Megoran disagrees and

provides numerous stories about how morally messy the war actually was. His comments are certainly noteworthy. The Church, Christians, and even nations committed many errors before and during the war that made the situation far worse than it had to be. But war is a blunt instrument and I think the suggestion for moral perfectionism regarding the waging of war is misguided. For example, I am willing to grant Megoran's suggestion that the failure of the Church to stand up to national leaders was a key factor in the march toward the mistreatment of Jews and others as well as nationalist expansion. But my question is what is to be done once Hitler invaded Poland? One can try to relitigate the causes. But that does not resolve the present.

The final two chapters provide a positive claim for what Megoran thinks the church should do. As noted earlier, Megoran does not believe the church should adopt pacifism or non-violence as he considers these positions to be inadequate. Instead, the author says the church should be the church. It needs to be the same whether in wartime or in peace. Specifically, the church should be about evangelism, worship, peacemaking, and social justice. Megoran thoroughly believes in the power of prayer and the importance of the church and its members to speak the truth boldly in word and lifestyle, even if such behavior leads to martyrdom. He makes a strong case that too many Christians have allowed their faith to be polluted with nationalism. Though recognizing the benefits of nationalism, he details how nationalism can also heighten hatred, racism, violence, and warfare. The church, he says, must speak out against these attitudes and behaviors because all humanity bears the image of God, other nations harbor our fellow Christians, and we comprise the true "nation, i.e. the church" that is worthy of self-sacrifice.

I say too little when writing that this book is a passionate and sustained argument for Christians to abandon war making. I think Megoran should be commended for reminding Christians that our citizenship is a heavenly one. He is correct that too often we have allowed our love of country to prevent a sober evaluation of our nation's wars. I found his arguments

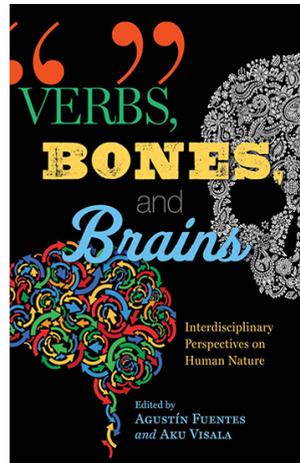
more compelling because he was an Evangelical with a high view of scripture, specifically he actually believes in the Gospel and its power to transform lives, churches, and the larger society.

Unfortunately, I have not been fully persuaded to his viewpoint because I am not convinced that war is sin. War is certainly the result of sin. But to suggest that all violence is evil runs the risk of making God an author of evil which seems strange in light of Exodus 15:3 and God's behavior elsewhere. I think that Megoran improperly conflated righteous and unrighteous violence, thereby condemning both. His repeated mention of those that opposed the death penalty (pp. 80, 83, 119) simply confounded the question. For if Christians should not be involved in any violence no matter the justification then does this mean that a Christian cannot be a police officer who carries a firearm? I agree with Megoran that the church should not be involved in violence, (e.g. Crusades). But to go further and say that a Christian cannot be a soldier or perhaps a police officer is a different story. The soldier and police officer are acting on behalf of the state not the church. The state has the right and the responsibility to defend its citizens, such as when the U.S. used violence to rescue its citizens from terrorists and/or kidnappers in recent years. This is no different than Abraham who used violence to rescue his nephew Lot. Thus, I think that, Megoran, in his zeal to correct the church's close ties with its host nation (especially those countries with national churches), oversimplified the individual Christian's relationship to violence and its use by the state.

Augustín Fuenates and Aku Visala, ed  
*Verbs, Bones, and Brains:  
Interdisciplinary Perspectives on  
Human Nature.*

Notre Dame, IN: University  
of Notre Dame Press, 2017.  
Hardcover, pp. 271, \$50.00. ISBN  
978-0-2681-0114-5.

**Reviewed by, Viktor Tóth,**  
**PhD candidate, Fuller**  
**Theological Seminary**



This volume is a collection of twenty-one essays, offering a state-of-the-art look at the debates about human nature, presented at the “Conference on Human Nature(s): Moving Us Forward”, held at the University of Notre Dame in April 2014. The goal of the editors is to provide a wide interdisciplinary stance on human nature, reflecting on the notable widening of the debate about human nature in the past few decades; as a result, there are anthropologists, neuroscientists, theologians, philosophers among the contributors. The book is divided into five main papers (chapters) and two or three short responses in each chapter. Many among the twenty-three scholars are trying to propose or defend a “generally” Christian view on human nature.

In chapter one, Jonathan Marks, an anthropologist, argues that the most consistent articulation of human nature in the post-Darwinian world is that we are *biocultural ex-apes*. On one hand, it means that we are descendent of apes *but* with modification. We are not the *same* as our ancestors were, because the essence of being human is *to become*,

not just to be. On the other hand, *biocultural* means that we have been coevolving with, and adapting to, technology for millions of years, starting with the first stone tools made about two and a half million years ago. During this time the dominance of biological evolution changed into *biocultural* evolution, in which the crucial ability is to learn culturally provided niceties. Relationship and historical traditions became far more important than genetic codes as the individual organism transcended biological evolution, and, in a classic sense, the process of survival became *superorganic*. This process peaks today in things like the ability to fight diseases by antibiotics, or correct eyesight. Marks seemingly dines the possibility of a definitive *human nature*. The essence of humans is *becoming*, but not in an Aristotelian sense (i.e., having some kind of *telos*). Marks' becoming has no goal or purpose. As Philip S. Sloan points it out in his response, it becomes very problematic to define some notion of *good* that is more than adaptation to local conditions and surviving advantages. This instance makes Marks' view very problematic from an Christian point of view.

In chapter two, Tim Ingold, a social anthropologist, argues that we should think about human nature as a *verb*. He argues that life is an ongoing process of change to be *led*, and to lead life is to *undergo education* in reciprocally constitutive relationships. He recognizes imagination as the generative impulse of life that continually runs ahead of itself. It leads us toward the *not-yet-being*. Thus, human nature is not an absolute category or a guaranteed status, but an ongoing fabrication. Or, as Ingold puts it: it is a "humanifying." Ingold's argument can inform Evangelical theological anthropology in many ways. Most notably, as Richard Sosis points it out in his response, since in Judaism God's name is a verb, humans, as *imagines Dei*, must be *verbs* also. The main shortcoming of Ingold's project from a theological aspect is its attempt to describe human nature while completely ignoring the concept of sin, or its effect on human nature.

In chapter three, two neuropsychologists, Warren Brown and Brad D. Strawn propose what they call a *complex emergent developmental linguistic*

*relational neurophysiologicalism*. Their two preliminary objectives are: (1) to avoid the prevalent inner-outer dualism inherent in many models of human nature, and (2) to bring the manifold dimensions of human nature into the discussion. They also try to carve out a middle ground between philosophical and theological anthropology and neuropsychology, in the field of human neuropsychology “by at least expressing models in ways that allow the inherent complexity and basic functional properties of hypercomplex neural systems like human brains and bodies to be explicitly recognized” (p.124). Their basic assumption is that the brain interacts dynamically with all of the peripheral systems that control and sense the entire body, as well as extra-bodily tools and systems. Human nature emerges via and from this dynamism. Although supportive of many of their notions, I have difficulty in accepting their setting aside the metaphysical nature of human beings. In doing so everything that is beyond matter becomes an emergent property of the physical world. It is a refutation of the biblical notion which describes the material world coming into existence from the non-material.

In chapter four, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen aims to go beyond *genetic* evolution and consider other causal aspects of human development: the *epigenetic*, the *behavioral*, and the *symbolic*. Evolution, from this perspective, is organism-environment systems interacting and changing over time. Humans are but one element of the evolving *system*. He proposes that *Homo sapiens sapiens* had a *hand in making itself* via *religious imagination* which is natural for humans. It means that we are creatures who are predisposed to religious belief. Yet this *naturalness of religious imagination* is not just a by-product of evolution “but crucial to the process of human evolution and incorporates behavioral processes and a sense of imagination and hope that would... increase the likelihood of innovation and successful responses to evolutionary change” (p. 173). He argues that the most responsible Christian theological way is to move away from esoteric, abstract notions and return to a radically embodied notion of humanness. Although his concepts definitely challenge traditional

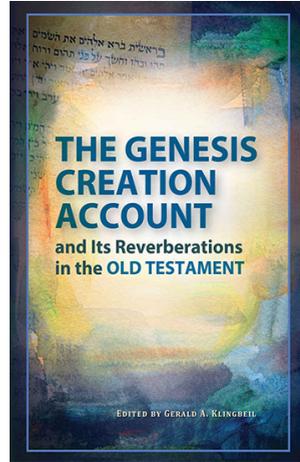
Christian anthropology, I find his approach the most promising from an Evangelical point of view. Not just because his notion of *imago Dei* is informed by both Old and New Testament texts, but also because he boldly claims that human behavior or human personhood cannot be properly understood without taking account of its fundamentally religious nature.

In chapter five, Grant Ramsey a philosopher, puts forward two concepts of human nature: *normative* and *descriptive*. The first one is religious in origin, and traditionally used as a guide to good behavior. The *descriptive* concept, on the other hand, *only* characterizes what humans do and are disposed to do. After a short critical assessment of both he offers an alternative: the *life history trait cluster account*. In this reckoning, human “nature can be defined as the pattern of trait clusters within the individual’s set of possible life histories” (p.226). He acknowledges the vast diversity in human nature, but trying to sketch a structure behind the diversity, and to provide a framework for better understanding and appreciating this structure. He claims that study human nature is no more than to study patterns of human traits and their causes. He concludes that there is no *essentialist human nature*. But his conclusion is basically an outcome of his method of investigation, and ultimately, his metaphysical naturalism. Or, as Aku Visala amply puts it in his response to Ramsey: “If the only thing you hold in your hand a naturalist hammer, everything concerning human will start to look like a nail” (p. 244).

*Verbs, Bones, and Brains* is not a theological book *per se*, so it should not be read as such. However, it is a must read for those who are interested in theological anthropology in order to be aware of what other disciplines are saying about human nature in the fast-changing contemporary landscape.

Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed.  
*The Genesis Creation Account  
and Its Reverberations  
in the Old Testament*  
Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews  
University Press. 2016. Softcover,  
pp. 395, \$18.49. ISBN 978-1-  
940980-09-6.

Reviewed by,  
**Viktor J. Tóth, PhD candidate,**  
**Fuller Theological Seminary**



The scholars who contributed to this volume were asked to interact particularly with the question: “What is the relationship of Genesis 1 and 2 and its inherent creation theology to other texts and textual genres in the Hebrew Bible” (p. 2). The outcome is ten well written essays on the cosmology of Genesis 1 and 2, its echoes in the other parts of the Pentateuch, in selected Psalms, in the wisdom literature, and in the prophetic literature.

One major line of argument throughout the whole book is that the biblical creation account is a polemic against the mythological struggle and polytheistic tendencies found in other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) creation texts (especially Babylonian). Hence, the creation account documented in the first two chapters of Genesis needs to be treated as an absolute unique record of how the world came into being. It also sets the tone for the beautiful saving message of the entire Bible which then occupies the cosmology of all the authors of the other books of the Old Testament. Most of the contributors vehemently argue against any notion that the biblical account is an adaptation of other ANE creation accounts. On the contrary, it combats the records of the other nations.

The authors also agree that the creation account in the first two chapters of Genesis is not a myth but history in its literal sense. Furthermore, the so-called Documentary Hypothesis is heavily criticized, and a plain reading of the text is favored. In one of the essays, Richard M. Davidson, puts forward what he calls the “passive-gap theory.” The theory advocates for an old universe but young life on earth. Genesis 1:1 describes the origin of everything, and verse 2 describes the condition of the earth just before “creation week starts” in verse 3 (p. 99). Consequently, the “pre-fossil raw material being created at a time of absolute beginning of this earth and its surrounding heavenly spheres at the unspecified time in the past” (p. 101). However, what is described in Genesis 1:3–2:4 happened only a several thousands of years ago, and the “Creation Week” is divided into six, “approximately” twenty-four-hour long days (p. 81). Paul Gregor also argues for a plain interpretation of the Genesis creation account by relating it to other parts of the Pentateuch. For example, he argues that if the world was not created in six twenty-four-hour days there is no foundation to keep the fourth commandment (i.e., the Sabbath). When it comes to the Book of Psalms, the creation account is observed from three perspectives: (1) creation is the reason to praise God, (2) it clarifies the difference between God and humans, and (3) it delves into the relationship between God and humans. It is also argued that the same creation cosmology was the point of departure for the Old Testament prophets’ worldview.

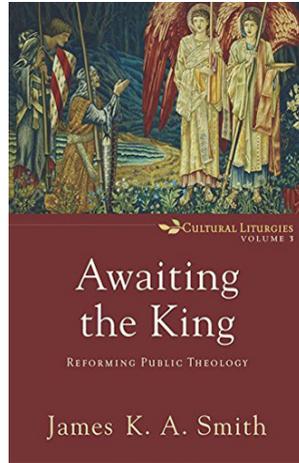
The book ends with two stimulating essays about evolutionary ideas in ANE texts, and evolutionary ideas compared with “biblical” ideas about life and death. The authors argue that, on one side, many ANE creation myths (especially Egyptians, p. 299) surprisingly supportive for an evolutionary world view, but on the other side, the biblical narrative “rejects them by emphasizing their negative impact on human existence” (p. 328). More importantly, the unique Hebrew view of death rejects the “intellectual submission to death” promoted by evolutionary teaching (p. 340). Separate chapters are dealing with the question whether the Bible advocates for a geocentric model (it does not), and whether the biblical

cosmology supports a notion of a “solid heavenly dome” (again, the answer is in the negative). The notion for a flat earth theory is also judged as non-biblical. The reflections on these issues are well informed and enriches the book’s intellectual sphere.

The authors were able to fulfill the main purpose, that is, to prove the close relationship of the first two chapters of Genesis with the rest of the Hebrew Bible. But doing so they also launched three other lines of arguments: the genesis creation account is (1) a polemic against other ANE creation accounts; (2) textual criticism of the texts is unwarranted; and (3) it claims a six-day, twenty-four-hour creation week. There is a strong argument for the first notion. The essays contain very detailed information about ANE creation texts and might be of appeal to anyone who is interested in this field of study. The second and third notions are reflecting points of views that have been debated for more than a hundred years, and the authors failed to bring any new material to the table. The essays disregard the uniformity of geological field evidence, the outcomes of radiometric determination, and the evidences from biochemistry, molecular biology, and molecular developmental biology. These all points into the same direction: our planet is approximately 4.5 billion years old, and life, as we know it today, is an outcome of a long evolutionary process. The authors also disregard the work of a growing number of Evangelical scholars who argue that the most recent scientific discoveries do not challenge the authority of the Bible. Overall, the book presents very careful exegetical work on various important passages about creation in the Old testament and in ANE texts. However, some of the more moderate Evangelicals will find the positions taken up in this book overly outdated, and extremely conservative.

James K. A. Smith.  
*Awaiting the King: Reforming  
Public Theology*  
(*Cultural Liturgies Volume 3*).  
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker  
Academic, 2017. pb, xvii, 233,  
\$22.99, ISBN 978-0801035791

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*Awaiting the King* is not the book that James K. A. Smith expected to write when he began his Cultural Liturgies trilogy. His *Desiring the Kingdom* (2009) and *Imagining the Kingdom* (2013) advanced a theological anthropology of *homo liturgicus* – humanity as imaginative, narrative, and liturgical animals, shaped by habits and practices in which visions of the good life are always already embedded. These volumes integrated multiple academic disciplines and cultural artifacts toward the development of a theology of desire and a phenomenology of imagination. For Volume 3, Smith initially envisioned “something like ‘Hauerwas for Kuyperians,’ a come-to-Yoder altar call for all those who were so enthusiastic about ‘transforming’ culture” (xi). Yet over a decade’s worth of research and writing, “the arc of my thinking has taken me from common grace to antithesis and back to an emphasis on our common life, but with ... a ‘second naïveté’” (xii). The result is a public/political theology infused with Augustine and dependent on Oliver O’Donovan, a proposal which is “neither a stance that is positive or sanguine vis-

à-vis the earthly city nor a posture that is fundamentally dismissive with respect to political society” (xiv). Posture correction, rather than policy commendation, is Smith’s task.

Smith introduces his project with a crucial question: “In what ways – and to what extent – can the ‘peculiar people’ that is the church live *in common* with citizens of the earthly city?” (6). Given that “the political” constitutes “less a space and more a way of life ... less a realm and more of a *project*” (9), how are Christians called to seek solidarity with people who aim their lives toward vastly different *teloi* than the kingdom of heaven and its King? Much of the difficulty here, Smith explains in Chapter 1, lies in a pernicious lack of contentment on the part of politics to remain penultimate. Sorting through various pluralisms, Smith concludes, “It is the *telos* of a people’s love that defines a people ... It is in their different intentional objects that Augustine locates the *antithesis*” (51). Chapter 2 continues this analysis with an account of the formative nature of worship for helping “the church as *polis* in order to then discern what that means for Christian political engagement in the *saeculum*” (54). This includes making explicit what is implied in the liturgy, renewing Christians’ moral agency, and inhabiting the history of God’s actions in Israel and Jesus.

In Chapter 3, Smith addresses the complicated, often unacknowledged relationship between democratic politics and its ecclesial sources: “The branches of political liberalism are a long ways from their Christian and theological roots” (93). Nevertheless, substantial overlap remains; characteristics of liberal society that retain their Christian pedigree include liberty, mercy in judgment, confidence in the security of the humane order, and openness to speech. Adequate Christian political discernment must thus include both “looking for signs of promise *and* forms of Antichrist” (112). In Chapter 4, Smith claims that “the challenge of pluralism is how to forge common life in the midst of ... ‘confessional’ diversity” (132), which requires the kind of virtue incubation in which Christian churches have long been proficient. Smith clarifies that he does not mean “to instrumentalize Christian formation ... but rather to recognize a kind of

by-product that flows from the fact that the gospel is how we learn to be human and the church is where we learn what a *polis* should be like” (148). Chapter 5 continues by briefly discussing the missional implications of liturgical political theology, such that public witness about the gospel is itself a matter of the church seeking the common good.

Chapter 6 engages perhaps the most trenchant critique of Smith’s entire Cultural Liturgies project: “Liturgy is not a silver bullet that guarantees holiness; nor is there any guarantee that mere worship attendance is a sufficient condition to make the people of God a ‘contrast’ society. To say that there is would be to lapse into a kind of liturgical determinism that assumes a simplistic view of formation” (168). Smith explores case studies in liturgical inadequacy (Western churches’ inability to overcome racism, in conversation with Willie Jennings) and liturgical capture (Rwandan churches’ complicity in the genocide). Still, Smith doubles down on his argument: the “pastoral response to our assimilation needs to be as complex as its cause. We are liturgically deformed; and by the grace of the Spirit, we are liturgically reformed, albeit inadequately, in fits and starts, in need of the Spirit’s counter-formation throughout our lives” (207). His conclusion offers four principles of calculated ambivalence in political collaboration: 1. Even disordered loves attest to creational desires. 2. Every critique is ad hoc; no (Christian) critique can be total or absolute. 3. Recognize penultimate convergence even where there is ultimate divergence. 4. Don’t lose your eschatology: cultivate a teleological sensibility (216-19).

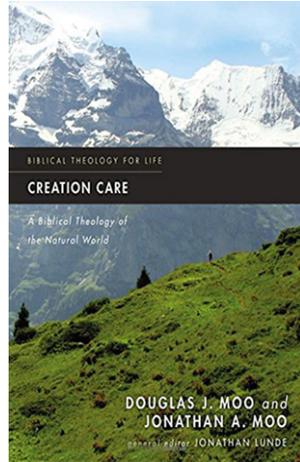
Salutary features of *Awaiting the King* include: clear-eyed realism about many challenges facing Christian public witness, a call to nuanced creativity in discerning the possibilities and limits of interdependence between liturgy and solidarity, and a robustly theocentric vision (in contrast to the ecclesial overemphasis present in some other virtue accounts). Smith rightly warns against the danger of “eschatological forgetting” (82), since “it’s precisely when your ultimate conviction is that there is no eternal that you’re most prone to absolutize the temporal” (29). Rather, trust in God’s

promised future grounds the church in its present endeavors in this world. The implications for pastoral vocations here are helpful and constructive. Finally, Smith's pithy summations, already a prominent feature of his first two volumes, shine through in the third, such as: "The state isn't just the guardian of rights; it is also a nexus of rites" (35); "We're more Pelagian than we realize" (213); and, perhaps his finest, "How to remake the remade world? How to reconfigure the disfiguration of creation we have inherited? And how to be *faithful* to the word of a resurrected Jew in the midst of modernity's markets? How to sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (179).

These salient strengths are partially overshadowed by several shortcomings. First, the book is marked by a pervasive methodological haziness regarding Smith's working definitions of public and political theology. These disciplines are interrelated but not identical, and Smith's idiosyncratic handling of them, in lieu of acknowledging decades of discourse on both, comes across as rather facile. Other voices are also missing: Smith's extensive discussion of the pen/ultimate ignores Dietrich Bonhoeffer's iconic dialectical treatment of the matter, while his case study of Rwanda looks at the genocide exclusively through Western eyes (when Emmanuel Katongole's thorough, virtue-inflected account would have been preferable). By contrast, Smith's overreliance on Oliver O'Donovan is disconcerting – particularly given the glaring contemporary threats of ascendant *illiberalism* – and his major focus on the state tends to underestimate the coercive power of the market in communal deformation. Finally, his repeated attempts to retrieve and revive Christendom, coupled with sarcastic condescension toward critics of Constantinianism (i.e., that they are "lazy" and "bandy about" the terms), are historically dubious and come across as curiously out of sync with the needs of the current moment. *Awaiting the King* remains an important contribution to political (or public?) theology, but these vulnerabilities require counterbalance and correction.

Douglas J. Moo, and  
Jonathan A. Moo.  
*Creation Care:  
A Biblical Theology of  
the Natural World. Biblical  
Theology for Life*  
Edited by Jonathan Lunde. Grand  
Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018

Reviewed by,  
Stephen Vantassel.  
Tutor of theology at King's  
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Douglas Moo, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and author of the acclaimed commentary on Romans, joins his son, who holds a graduate degree in in wildlife ecology as well as a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies, in writing on the controversial topic of creation care. In Part 1, the authors situate the topic by defining terms (e.g. nature vs creation) and by explaining why the subject is, or at least, should be important for contemporary readers. Fortunately, for biblically literate readers, this section is relatively brief.

Part 2 delves into the biblical narrative starting with the creation narratives. The authors dutifully explain how the biblical accounts contrast with contemporaneous pagan creation stories as well as review the biblical understanding of humanity and the impact of the Fall. Using the creation and Fall motifs, the authors set the stage for understanding the role of Christ as restorer not only of souls but the entire created order. The authors contend that the “new creature” talk of the New Testament is better understood in the framework of a renewed creation. The writers are

careful to reaffirm the spiritual importance and perhaps even the centrality of the atoning work of redemption for our estrangement from God. But they are also clear that the restoration goes beyond repairing of souls and reaches out to the wider creation. Unfortunately, much space was wasted on justifying the value of creation on the grounds of the incarnation. While not disputing the idea *per se*, this reviewer remains puzzled as to how the incarnation proves the worth of creation broadly speaking as opposed to demonstrating the value of humans specifically. This is especially true given the authors' failure to discuss Christ's treatment of the Gadarene pigs, curse of the fig tree and the miracle of the fishes. Did Christ show concern for the environment in those three events? Were those actions representative of his work to restore creation? Sadly, the authors do not say.

The same criticism can be made for their interpretation of the New Heavens and New Earth of 2 Peter 3:13 as renewed heavens and earth. They contend that believing that the creation will be replaced rather than renewed engenders a dismissive attitude toward the fate and treatment of creation. The authors may be correct. Perhaps the replacement interpretation of 2 Peter does encourage a cavalier attitude toward the treatment of Creation. But in light of Peter's use of the analogy of the Flood, could it not be said that the distinction, in practical terms, is meaningless? Whether the earth is renewed following a nuclear holocaust or completely replaced with a new planet, is there any real practical difference for the creatures that lived on the planet?

Part 3 discusses how Christians might live out the theology concerning creation care outlined in Part 2. Readers are properly cautioned about the need for priorities, namely evangelism of the lost. But the authors also contend that the Gospel is more than just soul saving. As can be expected, the authors revisit the litany of bad news regarding environmental

degradation to underscore that Christians cannot ignore this topic. Global warming, growing human population, and impacts from agri-farming are mentioned as causes or results of the imbalance in creation. Readers are exhorted to see creation care as flowing from the second great commandment of loving your neighbor.

The authors are careful not to overwhelm readers with excessive legalism or fear-mongering. They recognize that different callings will cause some Christians seeing creation care as a higher priority than those held by other believers. However, they note that Christians can do more than one thing at a time and doing something, even a little, is important. Ultimately, all must be done as stewards of God's property.

The topic of creation care is certainly an important one. Unfortunately, the authors simply repeated the errors of so many other books on the subject, albeit to a lesser extent. First, the authors did not take seriously the teaching of Scripture that directly connects our obedience to God's commands and the destruction of creation. The prophets repeatedly argued that Israel's failure to obey Torah resulted in the environmental catastrophes of the day. The authors understood this principle in part by their condemnation of consumerism. But what they missed was that the problem lies in not just avoiding spending but spending on the wrong things. If Christians spent less on ourselves that would not be enough. We have to take the next step and spend the money for the furtherance of the kingdom of God, be it evangelism, missions, poor, etc. Likewise, avoiding idolatry and divorce also reduce the impact on the environment. Just consider nations with high rates of idolatry (worshiping physical objects called gods) and ask, "How clean is their environment?" Could those two issues be related? This review thinks so. What about divorce? Divorce increases consumerism because now two people who shared a home and property separate and buy twice as much (See Yu and Liu 2007).

Regrettably, the environmental impact of our personal moral failings was missing in this book.

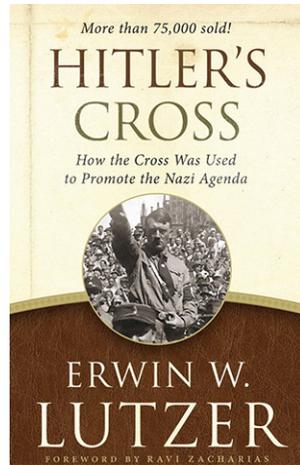
Second, the authors suggested that airplane was a moral challenge due to its impact on climate. They suggested that fliers purchase carbon credits to reduce the environmental impact of that flight. The authors base this suggestion on both a factual and principled claim. The factual claim is their belief that human activity (such as flying) is causing climate change. The principled claim is that we show love for our neighbor by caring for their earth. Setting aside debates over the factual claim, this review wonders whether Scripture ever requires us to look at the distant effects of our actions? It seems this sort of moral accounting is quite difficult. Perhaps God does require us to undergo rigorous moral accounting. But the authors should have proved God wants us to. In addition, where does the bible imply that caring for the earth is loving your neighbor? This reviewer suggests that the biblical model requires us to show concern for our fellow man and the environmental task and most of the problems will be addressed in short order.

Third, the authors ignored the human population issue. While mentioning the impact of human population on the planet, they neglected to discuss whether Christians should reduce the size of their families. This oversight is significant given the value of children as a blessing from God throughout scripture.

There are certainly more issues that could be raised, such as their neglect of voices countermending their own, such as one presented by E. Calvin Beisner. Nevertheless, the book is well written and has helpful questions at the end of each chapter. But pastors and teachers are admonished to read with a critical eye as the theology found here is not the complete testimony of Scripture.

Erwin W. Lutzer.  
*Hitler's Cross:  
How the Cross Was Used to  
Promote the Nazi Agenda*  
Chicago, Moody Publishers, 2016.  
272 pp. ISBN: 978-0-802-41327-7..

Reviewed by, Judith C. P. Lin.  
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First published in 1995, *Hitler's Cross*—a non-scholarly work—explores how the church in Nazi Germany first negotiated and finally compromised its identity and role in society in the *Third Reich* from 1933 to 1945. By investigating the ways in which the church gradually abjured its responsibility in society with Adolf Hitler's high-handed rule, Erwin W. Lutzer, a retired pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago, takes pains to draw lessons from history for his Christian counterparts in the United States.

The work is more than historical and theological. It is also pastoral. Thus other than accounting for historical events and context, Lutzer incorporates his own voice as he walks readers through the egregious history while interpreting its deeper meaning from a theological perspective as he understands it.

Lutzer believes that the *Third Reich* did not go wrong overnight, but was simply the final unfolding of a number of convoluted occurrences combined in previous decades. The first four chapters, therefore, trace the remote and immediate causes that contributed to the formation of

the *Third Reich*. While Chapter One offers an overview of the plight of the church, and some of the philosophical, theological, political, and economic elements that were at work before the *Third Reich*, Chapter Two discusses how the elusive Adolf Hitler came to believe that he had been called by the divine to fulfill a special assignment. Chapter Three and Four outline the religious background of Hitler and his associates, and how their beliefs were unduly translated into the political agenda of the *Third Reich*. Chapter Five to Seven—the heart of the book—examine how the church reacted and responded to Hitler’s propaganda and intimidation, and how the church’s identity was challenged and subsequently compromised under the state’s pressure, despite lone voices in the wilderness. Chapter Eight and Nine document the voices of conscience during the *Third Reich*, whereas Chapter Ten reflects on the lessons drawn from Nazi Germany for the church in the present-day U.S.

For Lutzer, the most pressing question for this period of history is how the church in Germany came to condone Hitler’s hideous agenda that blatantly contradicts not only the Bible’s teaching but also natural law (146). Sharing the sentiments with the German masses of the need for survival and the need to see the glory of Germany restored (43, 192), the church lost its ability to challenge the wedding of nationalism and a Christianity that had been dulled by theological liberalism (128-38). When Hitler’s nefarious agenda became known, the church overlooked warnings of figures like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller, and maintained the wishful thinking that diplomacy would fare better than bold confrontation (174). Numerous pastors and Christians chose self-preservation over costly discipleship, thus remaining indifferent towards the Nazis’ wicked treatment of Jews. A shameful period of church history notwithstanding, Lutzer contends that God has always been in control, even of the most devilish event of the Holocaust (60-8, 198-9).

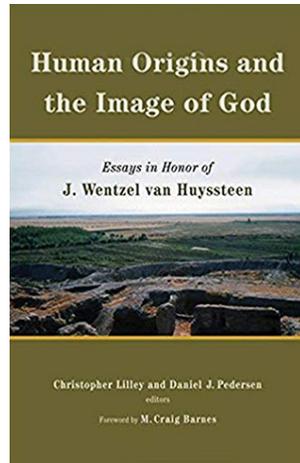
While he is not satisfied with the spirituality that stresses personal devotion to Christ at the expense of political participation (140-1, 246, 260), Lutzer also warns against the tendency of making the gospel

“secondary to a given political, philosophical, or cultural agenda” (247). He maintains that when pressed to choose between winning a “cultural war” and upholding a pure gospel, Christ’s followers “must let the cultural battles take second place so that the Cross gets a hearing in the hearts of men and women” (258). Defining the church’s place and defending the church’s narrative power in society have become increasingly challenging in the U.S., as, according to Lutzer, the church “is expected to shrink into nothing” in the public sphere (254-5). Since one of the book’s goals is to tease out the church’s role in society, other than addressing the responsibility of individual Christians (261), I would like to have seen Lutzer furnish the church with more practical guidance by offering one or two concrete examples of how local churches could have better navigated between engaging in cultural skirmishes while proclaiming a pure gospel when the two appeared to be in conflict, in light of his pastoral experience. As the effort to be in the world but not of the world is far from clear-cut (258), the challenges for many churches in the U.S. and on the global scene in the present-day, I believe, lie not in the lack of understanding but in the shortage of credible and effective examples. And the need for such practical wisdom seems to be all the more imperative in 2018 than two decades ago when *Hitler’s Cross* was first released.

Even though Lutzer’s work is not written for scholars, and hence, may not be rigorous enough to satisfy a scholar’s mind, Christians who take their faith seriously will benefit from Pastor Lutzer’s account, analysis, and insights in *Hitler’s Cross*.

Christopher Lilley and  
Daniel Pedersen (editors).  
*Human Origins and the Image of  
God: Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel  
van Huyssteen* Grand Rapids,  
Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017.  
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7514-3, 336 Pp.

Reviewed by,  
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Fuller, Pasadena



*Human Origins and the Image of God* is brought out as a *festschrift* to the Princeton Theological Seminary Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen, in acknowledgement of his scholarship and contributions to theological thinking on the question of human uniqueness and human origin. It comprises of a collection of essays written by some prominent scientists, philosophers and theologians. In this volume, they augment, challenge and at times refute his wide and pertinent theological reflections on the specificity of human species as he is in close conversation with leading paleoanthropologists and archaeologists and evolutionary cognitive theories of religion. The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 is an assemblage of essays written by a few natural scientists. Part 2 is a collection of writings by selected philosophers and historians. Part 3 contains reflections by some prominent theologians. In the introduction, Neil Gregersen traces the intellectual trajectory of van Huyssteen that grounds subsequent reflections. Gregersen notes that van Huyssteen follows a postfoundationalist hermeneutic combining the strength of both the

modern and postmodern epistemologies. His postfoundationalist epistemology helped him to overcome the problematics of the modernist distinction between ‘objective’ empirical (scientific) reasons and more ‘subjective’ ethical, religious, or aesthetic reasons. Gregersen also notes that van Huyssteen is a strong advocate of science-theology interactions as he averred that science is the “best bet” we have for understanding the structure of the universe and evolution of life and humanity. With his use of evolutionary epistemology, he was able to argue for the common biological roots of human rationality that signify the general trajectories of human reason. Gregersen also mentions that in his book *Alone in the World?*, Van Huyssteen expounds his theological anthropology in conceiving the biblical symbol of the *imago Dei* in human beings as embodied persons endowed with a symbolic awareness. These varied reflections of van Huyssteen are engaged by the contributors to this volume in highlighting certain aspects in regard to the specificity of the human species.

In the first chapter, Ian Tattersall traces the acquisition of human uniqueness through the evolutionary understanding of humans acquiring of bipedality, brain size expansion, symbolic thought, language and material culture. In the second chapter, Ian Hodder explores the concept of “Entanglement” which he defines as “the sum of human dependence on things, thing dependence on humans, thing dependence on other things and human dependence other humans.” Using paleolithic and evolutionary origins of religion he establishes that religions can be seen as playing a role in “making sense of, accepting, or coming to terms with, or rationalizing this entrapment.” However he does concede that religion can be both a response to, or a major contributor to such entrapments. In chapter 3, Justin Barret and Tyler Greenway explore the cognitive-evolutionary perspectives on human uniqueness and the *imago Dei*. They argue that animal domestication might have been a critical point in human religious

evolution and may be even central to an understanding of the humans as being created in the image of God. They refer to the fact that humans possess a unique cognitive capacity that distinguishes humans from non-humans by alluding to Higher-Order Theory of Mind (HO-ToM). In the next chapter, Agustín Fuentes takes a lead from van Huyssteen to argue that a substantial component of our evolutionary success is due to our being a semiotic species. He notes that the use of symbols and imagination in perceiving the reality around us as well as responding to it is a major factor in human evolutionary histories that sustained the survival of *homo sapiens*.

In the following chapter, Richard Potts goes on to describe the latest archaeological clues concerning the complicated aspects of human origin. As the human species evolved, the “enlargement of mental and behavioural flexibility, expanded connectivity across social groups and the growth of adaptive options to diversify into different cultures” constituted the critically important dimensions of human life. In this evolutionary growth, he avers that religion became one of the great avenues of symbolic understanding of the world as it has the potential to dissolve the differences and instil the coherence of human life and the unity. But, he also points to its ability to increase the differences between the people that would drive them apart. This confirms the earlier notion of religious potential for “entrapment”.

In part 2, Keith Ward reflects on the dignity and distinctiveness of the human being from a philosophical perspective. Ward argues that cosmologists who argue for the origin of the universe from a “quantum vacuum” will find little difficulty in postulating “nonmaterial, non-spatiotemporal entities and nonphysical causes.” Thus, he argues that this view can easily incorporate “an eternal, intelligible, causally effective, and not fully comprehensible origin and continuing basis for the physical universe” – God. He further advocates for a theistic evolution that captures the progressive emergence of consciousness and responsible action for the humanity in the material world. In the next chapter, Wesley

Wildman discusses the origin of “axiological sensitivity” where axiology is the faculty that conceives values—moral and aesthetic— as it evolved through the evolutionary process. He locates its origin in the development of human social-psychology facilitated by our embodied cognition and the “valuational hybridity” of reality present in the interaction of an organism with its environment. He claims that the meaning of our lives is construed through our individual and corporately structured adventures in axiological engagement. From a theological anthropology perspective, Wildman conceives God as the ground of being, which he understands as the condition for the possibility of axiological landscape of possibilities with “dynamic structures yet valuationally ungraded.” He disagrees with van Huyssteen for whom “God is morally interested and aesthetically invested being.” He claims that this anthropomorphic model has to be displaced as he denies all possibilities of a “valuational grading” by pointing to some “illusory stories of absolute valuational grading (God’s moral interest).

In the subsequent chapter, Michael Ruse also, from an “inquiring agnostic” perspective, raises some tough questions for Christians about human evolution. Firstly, he challenges the unique creation of Adam and Eve as modern science based on the shared mitochondrial evidence proves that human ancestors “hominins” were part of a larger group of conspecifics. Thus, he claims that there is no basis for Augustinian original sin. He shows that the “natural selection” of evolutionary process will do away with the Church’s insistence of male supremacy as biologists have repeatedly proven that female apes are as powerful and effective as males. He also raises doubts about arguments for theistic evolution as if God wanted humans to evolve out of natural selection, he would have gone out of luck. He denies any possibilities of a purposeful evolution as in his opinion the extreme complexity of the randomness of selection will preclude such.

Next, John Brooke takes a different approach as he argues that the adaptive cognitive fluidity as found in the human evolutionary process (also van Huyssteen) is manifested in inter-relations between technology and

artistry. He goes on to show how even mere “technological” innovations have carried aesthetic and religious connotations. He points to the manner of getting solutions to structural problems in the form of sudden inspiration that has the character of revelation. He argues that the constitution of human species is a cumulative effect within the evolutionary process. He believes that concepts of human nature and human uniqueness can only be adequately analysed by examining what humans *do*, and not simply by reference to how they are biologically constituted. This is in agreement with van Huyssteen’s own understanding that human evolution happened through “niche construction” that blurs biological and cultural factors involved in mapping human evolution.

Part 3 focuses on the theological and ethical perspectives on human origins and uniqueness. Firstly, Celia Deane-Drummond argues for “*inter-morality*” as the emergent of morality was parsed and shaped in interactions with other species. She concludes that evolutionary biology reminds us of the “collective morality”, that also includes the tendency to sin signalling the beginning of a “distinctive and deliberative collective will to err in the human community,” as a way of explaining the “original sin”. Then, Michael Welker emphasizes the aspects of conviction, communicability and comprehensibility as he argues that the presence of pluriform voices in their truth-seeking is what makes theology theology. Also, David Fergusson investigates the aspect of “anthropocentrism” that is key to understanding human uniqueness as he juxtaposes it with the paleobiological understanding of hominid evolution and warns about the dangers of alienating the human species from its intrinsic relationship with other species as well as extra-terrestrial possibilities. He challenges for a reconsideration of *imago Dei* as human beings are “embodied and embedded” in a wider narrative of creaturely existence. Subsequently, Etienne De Villiers explores the relationship between van Huyssteen’s postfoundationalism and his ethical responsibility theory and highlights the correspondences between the two notions. In the last essay, Dirk Smit notes the minimal presence of ethical implications in van Huyssteen’s

reflections and engages with the conceptions of several other ethicists in constructing certain ethical discourses in reference to the problem of “living with strangers” in the world.

The essays in this book deal comprehensively with the evolutionary science theories and relate them to theological issues (especially *imago Dei*). This results in a pluriform reflections on the understanding of human origin and uniqueness that will challenge and inform the reader. The mix of theistic, atheistic and agnostic voices is an interesting twist to this task. One of the salient aspect that is brought to the fore in this volume is a critique on the narrative of the sufficiency of a mere evolutionary biological understanding and emphasizing the “embedded and embodied” sense of human existence within the natural world. However, on the other side, I think that the process of engaging such an evolutionary and cognitive scientific interpretation to understand the *imago Dei* has raised more questions than shedding light on the matter. For example, an evolutionary awareness of the possession of a higher order cognitive faculty does not necessarily point to an automatic self-perception of human species as bearers of the *imago Dei* unless we account for the Self-Revelation of God. As we can perceive throughout the history of the Church, it has been repeatedly made clear (by Aquinas, Calvin, Barth and others) that a mere natural theology will never be adequate and the notion of the special revelation has to be accounted for. But, it is not clear how a “natural selection” process will supply the means to understand such a divine “intervention” event. Hence, it is rather safe to say that such science-theology engagements have a limited interpretational value as science may unwittingly assume a priority role. Also the notion of “collective morality” that emerges in the complexity of biological and social interactions to account for the notion of “fall” and “original sin” is still in need of more explication as it raises the age-old philosophical question of the existence of evil and good. Is this “imperfection” an inherent aspect of evolution and can we construe the meaning of evil as a mere absence of good or as a potential force counteracting against the “good”?

Lisa E. Dahill and  
James B. Martin-Schramm  
(editors).

*Eco-Reformation:  
Grace and Hope for  
a Planet in Peril*

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.  
283pp. \$36.00.

Reviewed by,  
Stephen M. Vantassel,  
King's Evangelical  
Divinity School



**Eco-Reformation** is a collection of articles by sixteen Lutheran theologians (ECLA) that discuss the integration of Christian faith with earth-care. These authors believe that Christians, as part of their Christian duty, must respond to the environmental challenges caused by climate change, rampant capitalism and its commodification of nature and other expressions of social and environmental injustice. The articles are not grouped into sub-sections but there does appear to be a tendency to move from the theological foundations to the practical outworking of integrating ecological concerns into the ministerial and sacramental life of the church.

A key goal of the writers was to reorient readers from a mechanistic and utilitarian approach to nature to a more wholistic and communal approach. Readers are repeatedly challenged to see God closely connected with the earth and nature (57). The book concludes by stating 95 Theses for a reformation on behalf of the environment.

Like many compendiums addressing complex issues, the content focusses on generalities and personal attitudes; only rarely prescribing

concrete steps to redress the environmental catastrophe they believe is coming. Readers will benefit from some useful distinctions and terms that can help them think in a more nuanced way about human-theological-environmental relations. Two articles deserve specific mention. First, Martin-Schram's article "Bonhoeffer, the Church, and the Climate Question" uses Bonhoeffer's ideas on church-state relations to provide a decision rubric to help determine when Christians are justified in acting against the divinely instituted government. In this regard, the chapter provides a corrective to the political passivity that may flow from Luther's doctrine of the two swords. Though I do not agree with the author that climate change justifies militant social action by Christians, readers will benefit from engaging with this chapter.

Robert C. Saler's article, "Joseph Sittler and the Ecological Role of Cultural Critique" is the second article deserving special attention. This piece provided an intellectual framework to discuss the morality of environmental change, by asking "When does humanity's use of nature, and its resultant change, become abuse of nature? The question is critical because too often environmentalists oppose change (e.g. harvesting forests) that does not harm the ecosystem. Regrettably, the article does not resolve how to distinguish use from abuse, but I commend it for at least raising it.

I was disappointed with the authors' decision to hold the West's use of capitalism and resultant desacralization of nature as the key problem behind our environmental issues while ignoring more pressing issues such as third-world monetary corruption, support for terrorism and funding the development of nuclear weapons. I suspect the environment would do better if these leaders funded agriculture and water wells rather than their bank accounts. The authors also never seemed to ask the question that if a sacral view of nature is so critical, then why is India not a paragon of environmental beauty?

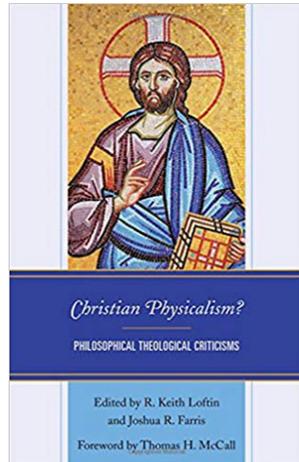
My greatest criticism, however, concerns the authors' failure to take biblical teaching seriously enough. Scripture describes God using

environmental catastrophes to punish nations that violated His law. Yet, the authors scarcely mention how disobedience of God's commands can negatively damage the environment. For example, not one author noted how our staggering divorce rate harms the environment through increased resource use of transitioning from one homestead to two (cf. Yu and Liu, 2007). Don't personal ethics matter as much as structural ones?

In sum, the authors should have helped readers navigate the complexities of environmental stewardship. Unfortunately, they simply echoed the mantras of the anti-Christian environmental movement instead.

R. Keith Loftin  
and Joshua R. Farris, eds.,  
*Christian Physicalism?:  
Philosophical Theological Criticisms.*  
Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018,  
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The self-proclaimed aim of this collection of essays is to push back against Christian physicalism. As a PhD candidate, writing a dissertation on this very topic with similar inclinations against physicalism, I was eager to get my hands on the book. It is a massive volume with wide ranging subjects including Bible exegeses, historical theology, philosophy of mind, brain science, ecclesiology, and more. However, after reading the chapters, I think the book merits a mixed review.

On the positive side, the editors did a good job collecting some of the strongest arguments for dualism and thus presenting a wide perspective on the issue.<sup>1</sup> These essays make the book a valuable contribution in this very important debate. Three among them approaching the subject form a historical point of view: Paul L. Gavriyuk's survey of Late Antiquity, and early Christianity, Thomas Atkinson's assessment of Mediaeval thought, and R. T. Mullins' insights on the question of Nestorianism both past and present. Many of the authors also deal deeply with the biblical data. One of them is Jason McMartin, whose essay compares different opinions on the intermediate state based on Chalcedonian doctrine. Charles Taliaferro's articles regarding Christological questions (mostly about the death of Christ) and another on physicalism and hamartiology are also very informative. His willingness to enter into a fruitful dialog with physicalist views (instead of just flatly reject them) makes both of his articles fresh and stimulating (e.g., coining the term "moderate physicalism"). His "integrative dualism" and Brandon Rickabaugh's notion of "bodily soul" should be taken seriously for theologians who are interested in theological anthropology. In a joint endeavor Rickabaugh and C. Stephen Evans pushing back against the physicalism of Warren Brown and Brad Strawn very effectively in my opinion. John W. Cooper's article toward the end of the book is also a good example of constructive engagement. He seems to be one of the most stable and imaginative defender of substance dualism, and his piece is one of the highlights of the book. Another valuable feature of the volume is that every chapter ends with a list of suggested further readings on the specific topics and arguments covered in the chapter.

One of the most common liabilities of many of the authors is that they are clearly not informed about the recent development of physicalist theological anthropology (notable exceptions are R. Scott Smith and Brandon Rickabaugh). An obvious outcome of this lack of acquaintance

1 There is even a monist among the authors from the "other side" of the spectrum, Bruce L. Gordon, who argues for an "occasionalist idealism of the sort advocated by George Berkeley and Jonathan Edwards" (394).

is that they seem not to take seriously enough the difference between reductive and nonreductive physicalisms (even when they claim to do so). For example, R. Scott Smith argument against Daniel Dennett (who is a self-declared atheist) is unwarranted in a book about “Christian” physicalism. Reductionism is indeed a major issue for Christian physicalists and they deal with it accordingly, often doing a better job than their dualist colleagues. Another impediment is that most of the authors use terms like “materialism,” “physicalism,” and “naturalism” too loosely, thus creating more confusion than insight. An even bigger problem that many of the contributors do not make an effort to differentiate between “physicalism” per se, and nonreductive physicalism. As an outcome of this negligence, important terms (e.g., aggregate, complex system, emergence, whole-part causation, etc.) are improperly used. Unfortunately, these deficiencies make some of the articles look amateurish when compared to the usually very comprehensive arguments of Christian physicalist scholars.

Another shortcoming of some of the essays (especially in the first half of the book) that they only reiterate the age-old arguments against physicalism. The “old” critiques are usually organized around three notions: (1) an immaterial entity (soul)<sup>2</sup> is needed to organize and unify the physical parts of the body, (2) soul is needed to explain self-awareness and, ultimately, consciousness (or, rather, the unified experience of consciousness), and (3) having a soul as core existential property is the only way to secure personal identity in time.<sup>3</sup> Nonreductive physicalist (and even “plain” physicalists, like Terrence W. Deacon) gave very good explanation regarding the first issue in the past fifteen years (mostly using

2 Words like “soul,” “mind,” “spirit” are used interchangeably.

3 I do not mention the so called “free-will/agency” problem here, because it is a major quest for monists and their argument supporting free will is at least as good (if not better) than most of their dualist colleagues (for two remarkable example see Nancey Murphy, Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?: Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* [Oxford: University Press, 2007, 2010], and Philip Clayton, *In Quest of Freedom: The Emergence of Spirit in the Natural World*, Frankfurt Templeton Lectures, eds. Michael G. Parker and Thomas M. Schmidt [Frankfurt: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]).

complex systems theory and emergence theory). In contemporary debate the discussion shifted toward questions about physicality itself (e.g., what matter is). The problem with the second notion (regarding consciousness) is that, so far, nobody (neither dualists nor physicalist) was able to explain what consciousness is. To base an argument (or critique) on something so unclear is questionable, at least. The third critique (about identity) is indeed a major one for all Christians since we believe that our pre- and post-resurrected self will be the same. Regrettably, the substance dualist “solution” exists only in the ivory towers of some analytic philosophers. The argument usually goes like this: To secure the numerical identity of an entity being constructed of many parts throughout time, all the parts must remain numerically identical during that same period of time. It means that if one of the parts of my car needs to be replaced (for example a lightbulb), my car is not numerically the same after the replacement. Given the fact that our physical parts (cells of our body, or even an organ after a transplant) are constantly changing, physicality cannot guarantee the numerical identity of a person. Thus, the need for a non-physical entity (soul) to guarantee that the sameness of pre- and post-resurrection identity. There are many flaws of this argument. One of them is that it does not differentiate between type and token identity.<sup>4</sup> But regardless, there is a growing consensus among scholars that neither concepts of identity are wide enough to count for all the mental aspects of human life. I hope that in the future the monist-dualist debate moves away from these outdated arguments toward a more constructive stance represented by Gavriluk, Atkinson, Mullins, McMartin, Taliaferro, Rickabaugh, Evans, and Cooper in this volume.

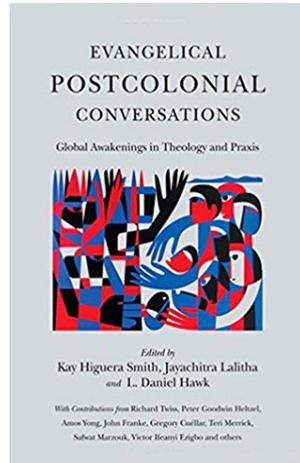
All in all, I find the book helpful. Although, in my opinion it does not demonstrate that Christians should resist the trend to mold physicalism into Christianity’s frame, it sheds light on the potential dangers of too

4 Furthermore, arguing that a non-physical substance is needed to guarantee the identity of the person and that non-physical substance is what we call “soul” is a perfect example of *circulus in probando*.

much physicalism. It also demonstrates the need to formulate a “new,” more meticulous language to clear out some of the obvious confusions of the field. Another takeaway is that those who respect the more scientifically informed arguments of Christian physicalist scholars can benefit more from their work; and thus, represent dualism more effectively. It seems, that for those of us who do so, the debate is shifting from monism-dualism toward reductionism non-reductionism, and from a Newtonian-mechanistic to a post-Newtonian wholistic worldview.

Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk (eds).  
*Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis.*  
Downers Grove: IVP Academic,  
2014. eb, 272, \$30.00,  
ISBN 978-0-8308-9631-8.

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Conversation begets opportunity. Yet, with unfamiliar conversation partners, how to best navigate the discursive shibboleths? In this collection of theopolitical essays, a roundtable of knowledgeable guides offers orientation to the shared terrain overlaid (contested?) by postcolonial studies and evangelical theology. Most of the essays have been intentionally co-authored, thus evoking a sense of discussion throughout the volume; the process of nominating the editorial

team, itself, was peer-democratized. Connections to Evangelicalism tether every contributor by claim (i.e., personal identification) and/or by context (i.e., institutional setting). Together the contributors call for constructive, reorienting, and multivocal engagements to take place within Evangelicalism—an invitation that remains open, given the present state [2018] of religio-public discourse globally.

A total of 28 authors contributed essays. Following introductory pieces by seven contributors, this anthology is divided into five parts. First, “Mission and Metanarrative” includes four chapters that feature noteworthy analyses of American Indian [sic] and Asian Indian colonial contexts, as well as postcolonial resourcing for constructing African Christology; as a result, numerous imperialisms imposed historically for the benefit of Western Christianity come under indictment. Part two, “The Stories behind the Colonial Stories,” collects two essays seeking to deconstruct philosophical and sociopolitical narratives that have been employed historically to fund instantiations of Euro-American colonizing; given the rich analysis on offer, readers today may very well wonder whether there is anything *post-* about the *colonial* mentalities being critiqued here (and largely operative today). Three chapters in the third part, “Revisioning Evangelical Theology,” resoundingly intonate within postcolonial tonalities certain modulations for classical theological loci, including eschatology, Christology, and pneumatology. Four chapters in part four, “Transforming the Evangelical Legacy,” privilege *praxis* for a strategic liberating from the colonized mindset that seems to correlate to evangelical imaginaries; such theory-laden-practice and practice-driven-theory, complexified by the notion of iterative cycling between action and reflection, function as the beating ministerial heart of the volume as a whole. In part five, “Closing the Circle,” the lone chapter endorses opportunities for furthering postcolonial-evangelical conversations, thereby serving thematically to conclude the anthology. A brief benediction and an *in memoriam* for contributor Richard Twiss are included at the end of the text.

Liabilities and benefits abound, both, throughout this collection. Consideration for the background of this project reveals an intent to provide convincing rejoinder to both sides of the “liberal” (postcolonial) and “conservative” (evangelical) divide within Global North contemporary theopolitics—an entrenchant polemics evident, in particular, since Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Heltzel’s (2008) *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo*.<sup>1</sup> As with that pathbreaking anthology, this collection privileges (for the most part) a U.S. perspective, particularly in its working definition of Evangelicalism. The index includes no entry for “Evangelicalism,” although one of the introductory essayists does articulate “six evangelical attributes,” viz. christocentrism, conversionism, charism, textualism, activism, and communitarianism.<sup>2</sup>

1 Even prior to the release of Benson and Heltzel’s (largely) U.S.-centric volume (October 2008), the University of Manchester’s Lincoln Theological Institute inaugurated a series of international meetings entitled “Divinity After Empire” (May 2008). In the years following these coinciding events, similar discussions were taking place in a number of meetings and media—viz. the “Postcolonial Theology Network” Facebook group (founded September 2008), a book panel for Benson and Heltzel’s collection during the American Academy of Religion annual meeting in Chicago (November 2008), a meeting at United Theological College in Bangalore entitled “Decolonizing the Body of Christ” (January 2010), the launchings of the *Journal of Postcolonial Theory and Theology* (first issue October 2010) and *Journal of Postcolonial Networks* (first issue November 2011), a series of meetings sponsored by the organization Postcolonial Networks entitled “Postcolonial Roundtable” in Wenham (October 2010) and San Francisco (November 2011), and the “Postcolonialism and Religions” monograph series by Palgrave Macmillan (initial title June 2012). The volume presently under review is one fruit from some of these cultivations. For more information, see <http://www.borderlesspress.org/postcolonial-networks-timeline/> and the two contributions by Joseph Duggan in the present volume (viz. Acknowledgements and Introduction to Part Five).

2 From his observations of the roundtable, Robert Heaney notes certain “attendant thought[s] and practice[s] sometimes associated with evangelicalism,” which for him include “patriarchy, nationalism, social conservatism, racial discord, conservative Republicanism, the privatization of faith, Reformed theology, imperialism and the desire to make evangelicalism a uniquely American civil religion”; these may also be seen as “the very loci for evangelical postcolonialisms” (29-30). While the point is well-taken, such comments do further reify a predominant (and likely domineering) U.S. frame of reference.

Congruences between this taxonomy and other descriptions of Evangelicalism (e.g., the so-called Bebbington quadrilateral) would appear to extend this volume's applicability beyond U.S. shores. However, the text's subtitle in its present form belies a residual Global North-centrism running throughout this project.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the term "evangelical" can be of significant benefit beyond the Global North contexts being presupposed here. The volume's appeal may, therefore, be limited in Global South contexts that are given no explicit consideration or direct representation in these pages. This may be, after all, an intramural conversation for Evangelicals and less than helpful within dissimilar geopolitical contexts.

The key pragmatic question is whether readers can recognize enough common ground between themselves and these progressive authors, in order to inhabit a shared discursive space sufficient to engage supremely important concerns, such as power, identity, sociality, and faithfulness. The potential for so much dissonance of assumptions and interpretations might rightly be perceived as a weakness for any project; yet this potentiality is, for this volume, a strength. It is the very novelty of terminology, literatures, logics, and aesthetics demonstrably attendant on postcolonial approaches that is of most notable value for, in particular, the evangelical everyperson. Risk is inherent in the conversation and engagement.

Conversation not only begets opportunity but assumes openness, honesty, and all the trappings of our particular commitments. Clearly some degree of practical theological sophistication is necessary (*inter alia*) for this project to succeed in its larger goal of instantiating further global awakenings in praxis, theology, decolonization, liberation—and, dare this Evangelical say: salvation. For the less-than-initiated Evangelical looking to engage postcolonial thought, this collection offers several entry

3 The present essays were collected (commissioned?) under the working title, "Great Awakenings: Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations," which clearly evokes British-American sensibilities for framing such theological and communal renewal.

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points for carrying on such engagement, always with the conviction that transformation of this inequitable world—a world that God loves—is possible.

## Notes

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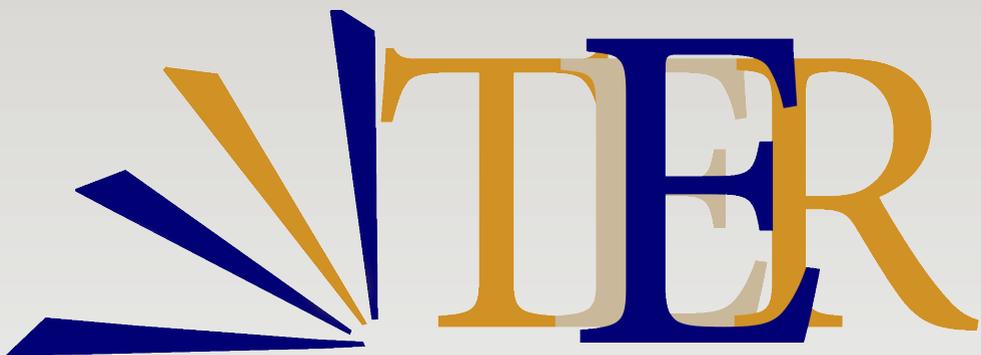
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