EDITORIAL

The history of Scottish Christian mission 'overseas' is probably most famously associated David Livingstone whose bicentenary was celebrated in on 2013. This year marks the bicentenary of two Scottish missionaries to China, by no means as well known as Livingstone, although significant in their own right. One of these, James Legge, has had an influence well beyond the missionary sphere—a conference dedicated to his legacy and context is planned for Edinburgh in June. The continuing significance of the other, William Chalmers Burns, is more difficult to assess.

James Legge (born 20 December 1815) was raised in a strict, evangelical Congregational family in Aberdeenshire, educated at the Grammar School in Aberdeen, then King's College, Aberdeen, from which he graduated with distinction and as a prizeman in 1835. He proceeded to study divinity in Highbury College, England, and after a period of language study in London, ordination, and marriage, arrived in Malacca in January 1840. He soon became the Principal of the Anglo-Chinese College there and deepened his knowledge of Chinese language and literature. He seems to have been an effective preacher. By 1843 he was transferred to Hong Kong and to take charge of a new L.M.S. mission station. Here he stayed until 1873, dividing his time between theological education in the seminary, advancing his own scholarly pursuits, acting as pastor to the English congregation of the non-Conformist chapel, and being a 'judicious citizen of the colony', as his DNB entry puts it.[1] Before he left for good, he toured north China in order to visit five 'great sights': 'the Tomb of Confucius, the Altar of Heaven, the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, and the T'ae Shan, the sacred mountain of China'.[2]

At this point, Legge returned to Scotland, having left his missionary career behind. He was determined to satisfy his own inclinations during his remaining years, and this coincided with his interest in the Chinese classics. In 1876 he became the first non-Conformist to hold a professorship in Oxford with his appointment to a new chair in Chinese language and literature, held in conjunction with a fellowship at Corpus Christi College, a post that he held until his death in 1897. His influence here continues to be tangible, as he was a seminal figure in the emerging fields of Sinology and comparative religions. Amongst his other activities, he

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1 N. J. Girardot, 'Legge, James (1815–1897)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16354>.

2 Helen Edith Legge, *James Legge, Missionary and Scholar* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1905), pp. 177–8.

contributed six volumes of translations to Max Müller's Sacred Books of the East series, which comprised fifty volumes in total.

It would seem that the 'scholar' part of Legge's career offers the more straightforward case for assessment, for here his achievement was substantial and his influence pervasive. It came, however, as part of a reassessment of the place of Christianity in the community of 'world religions'. This shift had begun already during Legge's time in China, and placed him in some tension with the L.M.S. which was his 'sending' agency. This is to belittle neither his significant contribution to the development of the Protestant Chinese church—especially in terms of theological education and resources for worship—nor to the missionary enterprise: one of the aims of his translations was to provide a cultural context and awareness for missionaries that followed.

It does make for a marked contrast, however, with the career of William Chalmers Burns (born 1 April 1815) whose story intersects deeply with that of two more famous individuals. Like Legge, Burns was educated, in part, in Aberdeen, but grew up the son of the manse, his father being minister in Kilsyth. While for a time he harboured hopes of going into Law, he was gripped by a call to gospel ministry and in 1834 proceeded to study divinity in Glasgow rather than law in Edinburgh. Within a fortnight of being licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Glasgow in March 1839, Burns was deputizing for Robert Murray M'Cheyne in his Dundee pulpit, while M'Cheyne—Burns's elder by a scant two years, but already a seasoned and beloved pastor—was away for seven months on assignment in Palestine. Burns was instrumental in the dramatic revivals of Kilsyth and Dundee that followed in July and August that year. His zeal for evangelism unabated, he continued to preach in Scotland, based first in Perth, then in Aberdeen where simmering controversy surrounding the revival meetings in 1840 became very public in caustic and skeptical press reports. Inquiry by the Aberdeen Presbytery to a large extent exonerated Burns, although it regretted some decisions taken regarding the logistics of the meetings, and the fixation on Burns's involvement in them.

During this period, Burns was often travelling as an itinerant evangelist which ultimately took him also into northern England, to Ireland and, for a period of almost two years, to Canada. All of this activity, however, delayed a commitment that Burns had made while still a Divinity student in Glasgow:

> [S]oon must I offer myself, miserable as I am, to the Church of God as a candidate for the work of an evangelist; and still more, that Church must decide, so great is the honour I have in prospect, whether in this land or among the

> perishing heathen it shall be my lot to preach to sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ crucified.[3]

In the event, the intended destination was India. But the intervention of bureaucratic uncertainty about overseas placement, combined with the invitation to fill M'Cheyne's pulpit led to a delay of several years. In 1846, Burns, having returned to Scotland from Canada, received the invitation from the English Presbyterian Church Missionary Committee to be their first missionary to China. The offer threw Burns into some confusion, as Indian mission was still in his thoughts. Over a period of months, however, the conviction grew that China should be his field of service. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1847.

His first seven years were full of activity, but devoid of converts—surely a difficult circumstance for the evangelist of Kilsyth and Dundee. A move of almost 300 miles north to Amoy provided the base for an evangelistic tour which saw the first baptized converts to Christianity in his ministry. A brief, enforced return to Scotland interrupted this phase of mission. Back in China, by December 1855 his path had crossed that of the young James Hudson Taylor whose own missionary career in China was still in its early days. They spent seven months together, with Burns's prayer life deeply impressing the younger missionary, while Hudson Taylor's practice of wearing full Chinese dress inspired Burns to adopt the practice as well.[4] In spite of the firm friendship, ill health necessitated Hudson Taylor's return to Shanghai in the north. They never worked together again, but the influences had been mutual and lasting.

Burns never stopped travelling, it seems, even when he had a local base. Frequent tours into the interior were interspersed with his own translation activities, including a selection of psalms and hymns. By the mid 1860s, now based in Peking, Burns turned his hand to the translation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which he loved and had read repeatedly since childhood. While attempting to plant churches in Manchuria, Burns contracted an illness and, weakened by deprivation, he died in Newchwang (Yingkou) on 4 April 1868, three days after his fifty-third birthday.

Although they had much in common, comparing the careers of Legge and Burns nonetheless throws up some striking contrasts. It is not clear how often they met, although they may well have encountered each other

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[3] Letter of William Chalmers Burns to his sister Jane, 17 October 1838. Cited in Islay Burns, *Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, M.A., Missionary to China From the English Presbyterian Church* (London: James Nisbet, 1870), p. 47.

[4] I. Burns, *Memoir*, p. 446.

as boys at the Grammar School, but Legge went to King's College and Burns to Marischal College in the days before they united to form the modern 'University of Aberdeen'. They were in their own way both able mathematicians and linguists. Their time in Hong Kong has some overlap: Burns arrived in Hong Kong on 13 November 1847; Legge was on furlough in England and Scotland between 1846 and 1848. It appears, at least, that they served together on a working party of Protestant missionaries in Hong Kong during February 1850. Their contrasts emerge starkly in light of a characterization of Legge by one of his modern biographers:

> Never much of a mass converter of the heathen Chinese, Legge had by [the time of his departure in 1873] proven his missionary credentials as a compassionate minister and educator to the Chinese community and his scholarly mettle as a translator and transmitter of Chinese traditions. However, he was in some ways more of a transformer of Westerners to a vision of a classical China than he was a converter of Chinese to the Christian gospel.[5]

Nothing would have satisfied Burns more than to be used in his evangelistic ministry in China as a 'mass converter of the heathen Chinese'. Their chief literary legacies are faintly symbolic: Legge's English renderings of the *I Ching* and other Chinese classics represent a significant monument of humanist learning; Burns's Chinese *Pilgrim's Progress* continues to exert a wide influence on Chinese readers.

[5] N. J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 69-70.

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THE WORD AS SWORD: SCIENTIFIC APOLOGETICS AS PRE-EVANGELISM

Finlayson Memorial Lecture, 2014

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The writer to the Hebrews assures us that the Word of God is 'sharper than any double-edged sword' (4:12), giving us our conference theme in a word-picture whose familiarity must not diminish its vivid and stark nature. Yet in an age which is sceptical of any absolute truth, let alone biblical truth, a loss of confidence in the effectiveness of that Word can have a deadening effect on evangelism. The sword has too often become something of a museum piece, endlessly studied, polished, admired and analysed behind the closed doors of the like-minded. The sword can too easily remain in its scabbard.

The prevailing scepticism in the public square about both the veracity and the authority of the scriptures has resulted in a renewed emphasis on the place of apologetics in evangelism. And of the various branches of apologetics, once has come into prominence over the past decade due to the rise of the so-called 'New Atheists'—that of scientific apologetics and its relation to the doctrine of Creation. That doctrine has always been something of a lynch-pin in Gospel proclamation, particularly when trying to reach those who have not inherited a respect for the scriptures. Before one can discuss the God who in Christ is the solution to the human plight, it must be established that there is in fact a God in the first place. Thus Paul, in his encounter with the Greek thinkers of Athens in Acts 17, famously does not start—as he did with his Jewish audiences—by reasoning from the Scriptures that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. Rather he begins further back, talking about 'the God who made the world and everything in it' (v 24). Thereafter, from the Creeds through to Calvin and beyond, it has been standard practice to appeal to the natural world as pointing to a wise Creator, this evidence forming vital preparatory work for Gospel proclamation. General revelation thus sets the scene for the special revelation of the scriptures.

Yet nowadays, if we try to appeal to the witness of Creation, we very soon encounter a major difficulty that did not trouble either the Church Fathers or the Reformers: the widespread perception of an inherent conflict between science and religion and the belief that cosmology and biol-

ogy have between them explained God away. The challenge that science poses to religious faith in the western world is of course not a new one, although it is by no means as old as is usually claimed. Whatever Darwin's own views on religion may have been, in the late 19th century his theory was used by others to wage a largely successful assault on the credibility of Christianity in intellectual life. Thus by the middle years of last century we have a situation described as follows by Roderick Finlayson: 'There are men who rule God out of his universe, and who claim that God did not act as Creator. Things have happened by chance, or by an inherent force in Nature; things have evolved without the controlling hand of God.'

In the present century this view has become consolidated as the default position of western society, the creation myth of our media-driven secular culture. And its impact on wider society has been devastating, with a newspaper columnist who knows next to nothing about science being able to write that morality is what you make it, since human beings are merely dancing to the music of their DNA.

SCIENCE, SCIENTISM AND SCRIPTURE

Many individual scientists today may be Christians—or other varieties of theist—but these are not the ones we usually hear about. Scientists who are Christians are usually under considerable pressure to keep their religious views to themselves. Meanwhile atheistic scientists face no such constraints about their beliefs. Indeed, they are regularly paraded in the media as members of a new infallible priesthood, sometimes appearing complete with vestments and temple: the white coat and the laboratory! But to call into question even their most tenuous speculations about, for instance, ultimate origins or human bioethics, is to be contemptuously dismissed as 'attacking science' or 'trying to smuggle religion into science'. This effectively hobbles us from any meaningful public engagement, since the debate is rigged from the start. So how can we break out of this impasse?

It is crucial to realise that this is not necessarily a specialist endeavour. The root of the conflict is not so much in the details of the various scientific findings, but rather the way in which the scientific enterprise has been hi-jacked to bolster a total materialist worldview, that is to say one where God and the spiritual realm are by definition ruled out of court from the start, no matter how contorted the resulting theorising may turn out to be. One example of this is the classic statement by Richard Dawkins: 'The universe is nothing but a collection of atoms in motion, human beings are simply machines for propagating DNA, and the propagation of

DNA is a self-sustaining process. It is every living object's sole reason for living.' [1]

The words 'nothing but', 'simply' and 'sole' give the game away. Of course the universe is a collection of atoms in motion, and human beings do propagate DNA. These are statements of science. But as soon as the words 'nothing but' are added, the statement moves beyond science and becomes an expression of *scientism*—the materialist or naturalist belief that only science can lead to truth. The author simply asserts what he purports to prove, that matter and energy are all that there is.

What light does this distinction between science and scientism shed on our understanding of those scriptures traditionally cited as demonstrating the divine origin of Creation? The traditional translation of first verse in the Bible is 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth'. Is that a true statement, uncontradicted and even confirmed by science? Or is it merely a faith-statement—theology rather than science? And when we read in Psalm 19:1 that 'The heavens declare the glory of God', is that merely poetry seen through the eyes of the believer, or is it a claim about reality to which appeal can be made to the unbeliever?

Certainly the apostle Paul was in no doubt as to the value of the natural world as evidence for belief in God. In the first chapter of Romans, in a passage whose significance was been widely acknowledged, he builds his case for the accountability of the whole human race to the Creator, whether or not they have the Scriptures or whether or not they have even heard of the God revealed there. He surely had Psalm 19 in mind when he penned verse 19 of Romans 1: 'What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse'. This accountability stems from the fact that the 'proclamation' of God's glory by means of the heavens transcends the limitations of individual human languages: 'there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world' (Ps 19:3).

Paul knows perfectly well that such arguments are not universally persuasive. Yet he argues that the problem lies not in the evidence, but the wilful rejection of that evidence by some individuals. Thus in Romans 1:18 he talks about the suppression of a truth that is perfectly plain. This is a theme to which we will return to more than once below, whether we're dealing with the history of science, or with some evidence from science—especially that from cosmology and biology.

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[1] Richard Dawkins, *BBC Christmas Lectures Study Guide* (London: BBC, 1991).

THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Most of us are familiar with the view that there has been a fundamental conflict between science and religion during the last few hundred years of western science. This view is very widely accepted, although not by academic historians of science as we shall presently see. Proponents of the 'conflict' model are fond of citing examples such as Newton's discovery of gravity dispensing with the idea of God driving the planets, Galileo's trial and imprisonment illustrating the fundamental conflict of religion and science, and of course Darwin's account of natural selection as a substitute for special creation. Darwin is a special case to which we shall return in the final section, but the point to emphasise here is that the 'conflict' model does not arise from the generality of the historical record, but rather from a vigorous and highly successful campaign waged in the late Victorian period and boosted in the mid-twentieth century by Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy*.[2]

There were two influential Victorian books in this field: J.W. Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, published in 1874, and A.D. White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* from twenty years later.[3] Both books were part of a movement designed to discredit the Church (especially the established Church of England), and to replace it with what Thomas Huxley called 'the church scientific'. Scientists were, in the words of Francis Galton, to be termed its 'scientific priesthood'. Its cathedral was the Museum of Natural History in South Kensington.

The books by Draper and White continue to this day to have an enormous impact, either directly or indirectly through the influence of Bertrand Russell, who adopted their arguments with gusto in his *A History of Western Philosophy*. They view the entire history of western science through the prism of a conflict. Where there was no evidence to support the thesis, White didn't scruple to make it up.

A case in point is the religious opposition that James Simpson allegedly faced in using anaesthesia to relieve the pain of childbirth, which he did from 1847. White thunders as follows: 'From pulpit after pulpit Simp-

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2 Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1946).

3 See P.J. Sampson, *6 Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), especially chapters 1, 2, and 5; J.W. Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Co, 1874; 24th edn London: Kegan, Paul, Trench and Traubner, 1904); A.D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1896).

son's use of chloroform was denounced as impious and contrary to Holy Writ; texts were cited abundantly, the ordinary declaration being that to use chloroform was to avoid one part of the primeval curse on women.'[4] Yet detailed investigation of both the medical and religious literature of the day has shown that religious opposition to Simpson's use of anaesthesia in childbirth was virtually non-existent. Such opposition as did exist was, more prosaically, on medical or physiological grounds.

A second example involves the use of entirely spurious quotations, and will be of interest to scholars of John Calvin. Regarding the impact of the heliocentric theory of Copernicus, Bertrand Russell attributes this direct quotation to Calvin: 'Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?'[5] Significantly, Russell doesn't give a reference. But Thomas Kuhn, in his 1957 book *The Copernican Revolution*, attributes the Calvin quotation to White, who adds for good measure that the quotation can be traced to Calvin's commentary on Genesis. [6]

But Calvin makes no mention of Copernicus in that commentary, or indeed anywhere else. Recent debate tends to the view that the quotation was simply invented in the late 19th century to bolster the threadbare case for the conflict model.[7] Like restorers of paintings by old masters, modern historians of science have done a great service by stripping away the dark veneer of the conflict model invented by the two Victorians and cheered on by Bertrand Russell. The glowing colours of the true picture of the relation of religion and science over the last 500 years have been laid bare for all to see. After all, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Pascal, Boyle, Newton, Faraday, Babbage, Mendel, Pasteur, Kelvin and Maxwell were all theists, and most were in fact practising Christians. And it wasn't that these luminaries just 'happened' to live at a time when a religious outlook was culturally respectable and indeed the majority view in society. It is clear from their writings that it was their own faith in a Creator that drove them to make discoveries about the works of the One they believed in.

This is sometimes called the Whitehead thesis, and sometimes the Merton thesis, but as is often the case it took C.S. Lewis to sum it up in a nutshell: 'Men became scientific because they expected law in nature, and they expected law in nature because they believed in a Lawgiver.'[8] This is

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4 White, *A History of the Warfare of Science*, vol. 2, p. 63; cited in Sampson, *Op. cit*., p. 116.

5 Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 550.

6 T. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 192; cf. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science*, vol. 1, p. 127.

7 P.J. Sampson, *Op. cit*., p. 40.

8 C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (London: Collins, 1947), p. 110.

why it is so outrageous when secular revisionists say that religious faith is a 'science-stopper'. History shows that it's quite the opposite: a science-*motivator*. No wonder that James Clerk Maxwell, the first Director of the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge—workplace over the years of no less than twenty-nine Nobel prize-winners in Physics—had a Latin inscription of Psalm 111:2 carved over its doors as a motto: 'Great are the works of the Lord, sought out by all who take pleasure therein.'

And what of the so-called conflicts? When Newton discovered the laws of gravity, he didn't then conclude that he could dispense with God as sustainer of the planetary orbits. Rather, he found that his sense of awe and wonder at the wisdom of the Creator only increased with this new understanding. In the case of Galileo, his famous disputation with the Roman Catholic Church had many contributory causes. The main one was because the Church was at that time wedded to the view of Aristotle that the earth not the sun was at the centre of the universe, and tried to shore up the theory with selective quotations from Scripture in the face of scientific evidence to the contrary. Galileo also stoked up the controversy by authoring a popular work exposing the pope to public ridicule—not perhaps the wisest game plan for a quiet life. Yet after his trial he did not languish in a dungeon, but was subjected to benign house arrest. Galileo believed in God and the Scriptures before his trial, and he believed in God and the Scriptures after his trial. So to have him featuring as he so often does today as a poster boy for atheism and materialism really is quite absurd.

It is clear, then that the testimony of history not only does not support the conflict model of the relations between science and religion in the western world, but rather offers strong historical support for a general picture of *harmony* between the two. This is a truth which was deliberately suppressed in the late 19th century, and which remains suppressed in popular understanding today.

FINDINGS OF SCIENCE: FROM THE STARS TO THE CELL

Turning now to some of the findings of science, we find here too that the conflict model is also quite misleading. Let us first consider the fact that the universe had a finite beginning. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig have written a fascinating account of this doctrine, in which they integrate the biblical, philosophical and scientific case for *Ex Nihilo* creation.[9] The first verse in the Bible is clear enough in most translations, but

[9] Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation out of Nothing* (Grand Rapids: Baker and Apollos, 2004).

as many of us will know, if only from the footnotes found in certain versions, the very first word in the Hebrew has occasioned some debate as to whether or not it really does signify an absolute beginning at which time creation out of nothing occurred.[10] We note merely that after an earlier fascination with alternative readings such as that in the footnote of the NRSV ('When God began to create…)', the more familiar translation has been rehabilitated by much recent scholarly opinion.

But what of the science? As noted above in the case of the history of science, here again we encounter a most interesting tale—an extreme reluctance on the part of some to accept unwelcome scientific data. The currently accepted view in cosmology is that the universe had a definite beginning: the so-called Big Bang. But until a few decades ago, this wasn't accepted; the view among cosmologists was that the universe had always existed—the 'Steady State' theory. Intriguingly, when the Big Bang theory was first proposed it was stoutly resisted, not on grounds of the evidence—which is what most people think science is all about—but because it sounded too like the first verse in the Bible. Thus Sir Arthur Eddington declares in his Presidential Address to the Mathematical Association, published in the journal *Nature* in 1931: 'Philosophically, the notion of a beginning … is repugnant to me. ... I should like to find a genuine loophole.'[11] As recently as 1989, the then editor of the same journal, Sir John Maddox, writes: 'the idea of a beginning is thoroughly unacceptable, because it implies an ultimate origin of our world, and gives creationists ample justification for their beliefs.'[12]

But a beginning was and is the way the evidence points. Although the timescale involved has been modified quite considerably over the years with the discovery of new information, the fact that there was a beginning seems is generally accepted. So no matter how philosophically uncongenial some people may have found it, the Big Bang was eventually accepted because that was the way the evidence led.

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[10] For a defence of this translation of verse 1 against the view that it is a temporal clause subordinate to the main clause in verse 2, see Gordon J. Wenham *Genesis 1-15* (WBC, 1; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), pp. 11-13.

[11] A. Eddington, 'The End of the World from the Standpoint of Mathematical Physics', *Nature* 127 (1931), 447-53, quotation on p. 450. This and the following quotation are cited in John Lennox *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion, 2007).

[12] J. Maddox, 'Down with the Big Bang', *Nature* 340 (10 August 1989), 425. We can note in passing that the term 'creationists' is apparently used here to refer to any who believe that the visible universe had a transcendent cause, not just so-called 'young earth creationists'.

Before we leave the stars, we come to the highly significant but often controversial concept of *design* as an argument for the existence of God. It is interesting to note, given the elevation of David Hume to be a kind of patron saint of atheism in modern Scotland, that neither he (nor, later, Bertrand Russell) rejected the argument from design, although Hume did rightly reject the over-extended application of that particular argument directly to the specific Trinitarian God of the Bible, as some before him had done). In his 1751 book *The Natural History of Religion*, Hume writes as follows: 'The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author, and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion.'[13]

Further evidence from cosmology highly suggestive of design has come to light in recent decades in the form of the uncanny fine tuning of the fundamental constants of physics. By this is meant that the values for gravity and for several other constants are all 'just so', amazingly finely-tuned in their various values. Physicist Paul Davies has helpfully called this the 'Goldilocks Enigma': as with Baby Bear's porridge in the traditional tale, the fundamental forces in the observable universe are 'just right' for solid existence and carbon-based life. The late Sir Fred Hoyle was startled by this unexpected evidence into claiming that 'It looks as if a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics as well as with chemistry and biology.'[14]

Those who argue against this obvious pointer to design (and hence a Designer) in these findings propose that there are multiple universes, with our observable universe just happening to look finely tuned. That of course, would not in itself logically remove the need for a Creator for any other universes that might exist. But might the 'multiverse hypothesis' not simply be another case of queasiness in the face of evidence that is philosophically uncongenial? Professor John Polkinghorne[15] is clear that the simpler explanation of *one* finely-tuned universe is more in accord with scientific principles and hence to be preferred. After all, surely science is about explaining what we *can* observe, rather than postulating what in principle we cannot observe.

This evidence for a cosmic beginning and for fine-tuning really is pretty overwhelming. Arno Penzias, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics

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[13] Cited in Thomas S. Torrance, 'Paley, Hume, Naturalism and Intelligent Design', unpublished conference paper, October 2006.

[14] F. Hoyle 'The Universe: Past and Present Reflections', *Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics* 20 (1982), 1-35, quotation on p. 16.

[15] J. Polkinghorne *One World* (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 80.

for the discovery of cosmic background radiation, the so-called echo of the Big Bang, is quite clear about the design dimension, in this memorable quotation: 'The best data we have (concerning the Big Bang) are exactly what I would have predicted, had I nothing to go on but the five books of Moses, the Psalms and the Bible as a whole.'[16]

But when we turn our attention from telescopes to microscopes, from the stars to the cell, matters are very different indeed. I remember sitting in a first year undergraduate biology class 40 years ago, when the lecturer paused and said 'Avoid teleology, because it makes bad science.' Like many 18 year olds, the term was unfamiliar to me but I did go and look it up in a dictionary afterwards and I remember being very puzzled. For the lecturer was known to be an evangelical Christian, in the leadership of a well-known local church. And his warning to the class about teleology struck me as very odd: why would a Christian want to deny purpose and design?

Of course I soon learnt why—that Darwin's theory has rendered design thinking impermissible and indeed redundant. Or has it? The *prima facie* impression of design is clear to all, atheist or theist. Hence Richard Dawkins defines biology as 'the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose'; so he stakes all on the deceptiveness of appearances. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the DNA double helix, says this: 'Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.' So we have as it were to keep pinching ourselves when peering down the microscope: 'Not designed!'

What is to be made of this? Well of course in principle the presence of a *mechanism* does not in itself disprove agency, including divine agency. Knowing about the process of internal combustion does not render invalid the idea that a car engine has a designing engineer. It is certainly true that many respected writers on science and theology are persuaded that the process of random mutation and natural selection is simply the mechanism God adopted in creating the living world, invoking design in cosmology, but not in biology.[17] Tim Keller for example in *The Reason for God* makes a distinction between evolution on the one hand as a 'scientific biological hypothesis' and on the other hand as a 'worldview of the way things are,' accepting the first but rejecting the second. The difficulty here is that none of the key players in the discipline of evolutionary biol-

[16] In Malcolm Browne 'Clues to the Universe's Origin Expected', *New York Times*, 12 March 1978, p. 1, cited in Lennox *God's Undertaker*, p. 74.

[17] I am thinking of the work of Alister McGrath, John Polkinghorne, Denis Alexander, Francis Collins, and Tim Keller.

ogy would accept the distinction that he and other theistic evolutionists like to make.

Darwin's theory is too often portrayed in this way as theologically neutral. Thus initiatives like the campaign a few years ago to 'Rescue Darwin' (supposedly from both atheistic fundamentalists and religious ones) by the Think Tank *Theos*, or the bizarre push by another religious Think Tank *Ekklesia* to promote 'Darwin Day' in churches each February.

It is indeed true that small-scale micro-evolution, such as changes in finch beak characteristics through successive generations, is observable and may be regarded as theologically neutral. But the same cannot be said about the inherently non-observable macro-evolution, those inferred large-scale differences that distinguish one species from another. Indeed the mathematician and philosopher of science John Lennox has noted that biological macro-evolution is in a very unusual situation in science, since it stands in such a close relationship to naturalistic philosophy that it can be deduced directly from it—that is, without even needing to consider any evidence. So to its advocates it simply must be true, because what else could possibly account for biological diversity?

The standard neo-Darwinian account with which many of us will be familiar is now being questioned on philosophical grounds. Four years ago, philosopher of science Thomas Nagel—significantly, not a theist—published *Mind and Cosmos*, in which he boldly defends the 'untutored reaction of incredulity to the reductionist neo-Darwinian account.'[18] He writes: 'It is prima facie highly implausible that life as we know it is the result of a sequence of physical accidents…' Rightly anticipating a strong reaction to his book, he adds this: 'I realize that such doubts will strike many people as outrageous, but that is because everyone in our secular culture has been browbeaten into regarding the reductive research program as sacrosanct, on the ground that anything else would not be science.'[19] So the really interesting question is not the usual one of 'Couldn't God have used this process in creating?' (for God can do anything) but rather a scientific question: 'Does random mutation and natural selection actually possess the fabulous creative power that is usually attributed to it?'

We find mysteries that material explanations alone are struggling to explain. For example the DNA in our cells—that which makes us unique individuals—has been described by Bill Gates as 'like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any we've ever created'. But where

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18 T. Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 6.

19 Ibid., p. 7.

did the software that drives the cell come from? Those who have bought computer games for our children or grandchildren have no doubt often wondered why we pay up to £50 for a small piece of plastic. The answer of course is that we are paying not just for the physical medium, but for all the hundreds hours of work put in by software engineers. So with DNA it is legitimate to ask if the software can really have arisen spontaneously from purposeless, random processes. Does the evidence not instead point to a Mind behind matter? If it takes a human to write an essay or a book, what are we to say about the authorship of the longest word in the universe, the 3.1-billion-letter word of the human genome?

The philosopher Antony Flew, who died a few years ago, was certainly persuaded by this evidence—persuaded to stop being an atheist. When he considered the language-like code that is DNA, he felt he had no alternative. Here is how he put it: 'All my life, I've taught my students to follow the example of Socrates, and follow the evidence where it leads.'[20] Some commentators suggested that Flew was becoming senile in the face of approaching death (he was over 80 at the time), not the kindest of conclusions. But perhaps he was simply doing what he said he was doing.

These arguments of Intelligent Design are frequently criticised as being 'God-of-the-gaps' reasoning: when we are confronted with something for which we have no material mechanism, we say that God has done it, only to retreat ignominiously once our knowledge increases. But the 'God-of-the-gaps' criticism does not apply here, since we are discussing an increase in knowledge rather than a lack.[21] And the *more* we find out about the wonders of the cosmos and the living cell, the *more* these things do indeed display the marks of design.

To permit such reasoning in cosmology but to exclude it from biology seems to be both inconsistent and unjustified. As in the case of the finite beginning of the universe and the associated controversy, it may be that here, too, philosophical queasiness about the implications of biological design will just have to be overcome because of the way that the evidence increasingly points.

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[20] Interview with ABC News, *Famous Atheist Now Believes in God*, www.abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=315976. See also Antony Flew & Gary R Habermas, 'My pilgrimage from atheism to theism: A discussion between Antony Flew and Gary R Habermas', *Philosophia Christi* 6 (2004), 197-212.

[21] In many discussions on this matter, I have noticed that most of those sceptical about Intelligent Design have only read online critiques and 'refutations', rather than having read the arguments at first hand from the leading ID proponents.

SOME CAVEATS AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

The first caveat is a reminder, as if we needed it, that this is not the Gospel but rather an exposition of the limited approach of general revelation which can only be a springboard for the special revelation of the Scriptures. Of course as well as the Old Testament texts considered above, we will want to take people to the first verse in the Gospel of John, and beyond into the New Testament. We will want to introduce them to the One who Himself it the Word, the One through whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that has been made. We will want to exalt the One who is the image of the invisible God; to assure people that all things were created by him and for him; to urge our fellow men and women to bow before the Person through whom God made the universe, the Son who is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

The second caveat is that we do not need to be experts in science to engage people on this issue. That may surprise you, but consider the fact that people often have an inbuilt sense of design in the natural world. As we have seen, denial of that design is largely a worldview issue, and when we grasp this it will be much easier for us to stop being defensive and instead offer some kind of meaningful challenge to God-denying theories, whatever our grasp of the scientific detail may be.

And in conclusion: why does all this matter? It matters because when we lose sight of God as Creator, and humanity made in his image, then society is all at sea, not only in regard to ethics but with the very distinction between animal and human breaking down. Genesis may be a polemic against pagan accounts of creation in the Ancient Near East, but it is more than that: a statement about where we come from and to whom we are all accountable. Some 3,000 years after David first penned Psalm 19, and hundreds of years of scientific discoveries about the heavens, what do we find? Far from us having *less* reason than the Psalmist to believe in God as Creator, we in fact have much, much *more*—from the stars to the cell. Far from it being proved that 'matter is all there' is . . . there are in fact many pointers that Mind came before matter. Far from it being shown that impersonal forces alone caused both the origin and the development of life in all its fabulous diversity, it looks increasingly as if such claims are at the very least overblown, and that attempts to deny the clear evidence for design in nature are just what Paul always said they were: a conscious and deliberate suppressing of this God-given truth.

The Word as Lamp: A Study in Revelation

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Empiricist, rationalist and idealist philosophies in the post-enlightenment west have subjected Scripture to intense criticism. Evolutionary science has questioned its reliability. In the church and academy controversies abound regarding the doctrines of Scripture such as inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration. Much, if not all of what has been predicated of God's word has been disputed and in the minds of many the integrity of Scripture has been left in tatters. Peter Jensen comments, 'the task of rehabilitating that position [that Scripture is the word of God] in a post-enlightenment world is truly formidable.'[1]

When we think of the doctrine of revelation, questions come to mind such as, 'How has God made himself known?' 'Where has God made himself known?' 'What has God made known about himself?' We are concerned here with a fundamental matter in theology—the communication of the knowledge of God to creation, and in particular to humanity—and so it is appropriate that we consider revelation and the word of God with respect to theological principles.

I. PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION

Principles are decisive for theological formulation because they shape theological viewpoints. There are two principles of knowledge: the *principium essendi* (the principle of being or essential ground) and *principium cognoscendi* (the principle of knowing or cognitive foundation).[2] In natural science it has been commonplace to view the *principium essendi* as the world while the *principium cognoscendi* is reason; the world is studied without recourse to supernatural revelation. Theology holds that God is the objective ground of knowledge; he is the *principium essendi*. As the uncreated creator, he is prior to and distinguished from all things. He is the ground of all knowledge concerning himself. God is also the *principium cognoscendi*. He reveals himself, indeed all truth concerning God is truth that he has revealed. The contentious issue is how, or through which means, he does this. How does God make himself known to humanity?

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1 P. Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Leicester: IVP, 2002), p. 27.

2 Definitions from R. A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 246.

God's revelation has external and internal aspects. The external is objective to us, while the internal is subjective. Hence the question of how God reveals himself to us is studied with respect to the *principium cognoscendi externum* (the external means, or principle of knowing God) and the *principium cognoscendi internum* (the internal means, or principle of knowing God).

Various answers have been offered as to the *principium cognoscendi externum*. Roman Catholicism argues that God is known by way of Scripture and the Church. Mysticism views the revelation of God as immediate—the way we know God is through our experience. Deism contends that God is known by the light of nature. In liberal theology human nature is the means by which we know God.[3] Reformed theology holds that God reveals knowledge of himself by way of Scripture (*sola scriptura*).

The *principium cognoscendi externum* is of enormous significance. Difference in commitment here explains some of the major ecclesiastical divisions. The reformation is an example. Philip Schaff identifies the doctrine of justification as the material cause of the reformation; the formal cause was *sola scriptura*.[4] The formal cause in other words was the *principium cognoscendi externum*—the means by which we know God's will. The reformers did not recognise the decrees of the church as an equal authority with Scripture and the implications were so far-reaching that schism was deemed necessary.

Why does reformed theology hold that Scripture alone is the *principium cognoscendi externum*? It is not a matter of choice, but rather a view Scripture compels. The authority of Scripture is not given by man, but by God.[5] Scripture is the means by which we arrive at knowledge of God. Therefore the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture is the final authority in all matters of religion.[6]

The external revelation must be matched with an internal principle—the *principium congnoscendi internum*—in order to be accepted. It has been variously identified as: reason, human understanding, feeling, reason and moral consciousness.[7] Scripture however warns against rely-

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3 L. Berkhof, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 118-19.

4 P. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (3 vols.; New York: Harper and Row, 1931; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 1, p. 206.

5 See *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) 1:4.

6 See *WCF* 1.10. Section 'c' of the UCCF doctrinal formulation, adopted by SETS, states, 'The Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour.'

7 See Berkhof, *Introduction*, pp. 170-80.

ing upon these. It teaches the corruption of the natural mind (Psalm 82:5; Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:18), the searing of the conscience (1 Timothy 4:2) and the deceitfulness of the heart above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). It directs us not to trust upon our fallen abilities (Proverbs 3:5-6). Indeed these are often used *against* the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

There are differences of view among the reformed as to a precise identification of the *principium cognoscendi internum*. Louis Berkhof identifies it as faith[8] while Herman Bavinck states it is illumination of the mind by the Spirit.[9] Common to both these views is the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. This is in line with 1 Corinthians 2:14 where the difference between receiving the revealed truth of God and rejecting it is found in the distinction between the natural and spiritual—what belongs to the flesh and what belongs to the Spirit. The enabling factor for knowing God is the Holy Spirit—he is the *principium cognoscendi internum*. Consequently, reason, experience and tradition function in service to the *principium cognoscendi internum*.

The doctrine of revelation is as significant for the study of humanity as it is for the study of God. Revelation is not only required for knowledge of God, it is also necessary for true knowledge of self. Thus Calvin comments, 'it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself'.[10] This 'clear knowledge' of self requires knowledge of God. Genesis 1:26 is one example of revelation that has vital bearing on the study of humanity. This text speaks of our creation and constitution. The *imago dei* is a revealed truth that is necessary to accept for a true understanding of human nature.

In summary, God is the foundational principle in theology and he reveals himself to humanity. A variety of views exist concerning his revelation which in turn explain difference in theological views. The position of reformed theologians is that God reveals himself to humanity by his word and Spirit. Therefore when we speak of *sola scriptura* it is in the theological setting of the Spirit's work. Knowledge of God is communicated by the Spirit-written word and accepted by the Spirit-born person.

We have identified Scripture in reformed theology in particular as the *principium cognoscendi externum*. Yet within reformed theology Scripture is not the only source of revelation, there is also the revelation of God

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8 Ibid., p. 181.

9 H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (gen. ed. J. Bolt; trans. J. Vriend; 4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–8), 1, p. 213.

10 J. Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), I.i.2.

in nature. So why emphasise Scripture in particular? We must consider more closely the different modes of God's revelation.

II. THE NATURE OF REVELATION

Due to the varied means and content of God's revelation it has been customary in reformed theology to distinguish between general and special revelation. General revelation concerns God's revelation of himself in nature, i.e. the created order. The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims his handiwork, the day pours out speech and the night reveals knowledge (Psalm 19:1-2). His mercies are new each morning (Lamentations 3:22-23), his common grace is made known to all in the rising of the sun and sending of the rains (Matthew 5:45) and his wrath is revealed from heaven (Romans 1:18). He is known in the way he governs his creation.

Romans 1 and 2 are particularly informative for the doctrine of general revelation. Paul says God's invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the beginning of creation (1:19). While general revelation does not reveal God's plan of redemption, it does have bearing upon it, for general revelation leaves humanity with no excuse (1:20). God's revelation of himself in nature entails that fallen humanity has moral responsibility for refusing to acknowledge God and turning from him (1:21-25). God continues to reveal himself in the created order after the fall, but the truth of God has been exchanged for a lie. The world has responded to God's revelation by worshipping the created order instead of him. Although general revelation does not redeem, it reveals the need for redemption. General revelation does not leave mankind in a neutral relation to God for in creation he universally grants mediated knowledge of himself to a fallen world.

The doctrine of general revelation has implications for all people. It undermines ground for unbelief and informs Christian evangelism. God reveals himself to those who disbelieve or disregard him; God is known and is clearly perceived in his creation, 'what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them' (1:19). Although no person is saved by general revelation, salvation is in not in a revelatory vacuum. Ultimately, agnosticism and atheism are inadequate worldviews. Wisdom has been exchanged for folly, and the glory of the immortal God for images (1:21-22). The reality is not that God fails to provide enough evidence for his existence (as Bertrand Russell argued), but rather that fallen humanity suppresses the truth in unrighteousness (1:18).

For Calvin, the understanding has been darkened to such a degree by sin, that for all people, Christian or not, Scripture is needed to see general

revelation aright. Colin Gunton comments: 'Calvin's view [is] that without the Bible as a pair of spectacles, we are unlikely to be able to recognise even general revelation for what it is.'[11] Scripture provides the authoritative teaching concerning his general revelation.

General revelation is a constant revelation from God to humanity, but it does not have saving efficacy. Instead it condemns (1:28-2:5). It thereby reveals the need for salvation and for God's will concerning salvation we must turn to the special revelation that he has provided in the Scriptures. Calvin comments,

> Despite this [revelation of God in creation], it is needful that another and better help be added to direct us aright to the very Creator of the universe. It was not in vain, then, that he added the light of his Word by which to become known unto salvation; and he regarded as worthy of this privilege those whom he pleased to gather more closely and intimately to himself.[12]

God's special revelation has great diversity. He reveals himself and his will in theophanies, miracles, prophecies, and the giving of the law. God spoke 'at many times and in many ways' (Hebrews 1:1). He breathes out his Scripture—his writing (graphē) (2 Timothy 3:16). The pinnacle of God's self-revelation is his Son, Jesus Christ. For he is 'the exact imprint of his nature' (Hebrews 1:3).

God's revelation is heightened and brightest in his Son for he is the perfect revelation of God. We must be wary of mishandling Scripture; it leads us to Christ, but must not be set aside like Wittgenstein's ladder.[13] Christ came to fulfill the law not abolish it (Matthew 5:17). His revelation does not make the word less precious to us, but more, for the word not only leads us to the Son, it is *his* word. Scripture, accompanied by the Spirit, is the way by which Christ communicates his will to the church today. Since the special revelation of Christ is communicated to us by Scripture, the *principium cognoscendi externum*, taking into account God's general and special revelation, is *sola scriptura*. Meanwhile for God's revelation to be truly apprehended it must be received with Spirit-born faith in Christ.

Now that we have viewed the relationship between Scripture and revelation we can consider what is involved in the communication of God's

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[11] C. E. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), p. 61.

[12] Calvin, *Inst*., I.vi.1.

[13] Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922) was as a ladder that must be climbed to see the world aright. In order to achieve this final goal the ladder must be discarded. The book's propositions must be transcended.

revelation to the world. Preaching is especially significant. Christ was sent to preach the good news (Luke 4:43) and commanded the apostles to do the same (Acts 10:42) for God uses the preaching of the word to draw people to himself (Romans 10:4). We must attend further to what is involved in proclaiming this word.

III. PROCLAIMING GOD'S REVELATION

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 develops the responsibilities of the preacher and provides instruction regarding Scripture and revelation. Here we learn of what the preacher must do as he proclaims God's word to the world.

> the Preacher… taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. (vv. 9-10)

For the preacher, teaching knowledge is teaching God's revelation. It is communicating knowledge of God that has been communicated by God. The word which imparts knowledge is written by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) and its teaching is brought home by the Spirit. Conviction of God's truth is from first to last a work of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 is a particularly important text in this regard as it teaches that the Spirit is required to interpret spiritual truths aright. He is the teacher who provides understanding. The Spirit is necessary for 'interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual' (v. 13) but the natural person does not accept the truth of God's Spirit (v. 14). The word is only accepted by one whom the Spirit has regenerated.

Peter Jensen observes that we are in 'a culture that deliberately and pervasively exalts human autonomy and dismisses God, as demonstrated in the privatization of religion and conventional morality'.[14] Secular confidence in human intellect and reason is misplaced because our faculties have been affected by the fall. We do not begin our study of God or the world from an independent or neutral position. We are either submitting to the truth, or suppressing it. The proper use of reason is in service to revelation and when reason is restored to this right relationship it may be used (though yet imperfectly) in a way that honours God as we study him and the world.

The preacher must weigh and arrange the texts of Scripture to form his message. He compares the Scriptures with one another and seeks the truthful interpretation, he increases in knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, discerns wise sayings concerning Scripture, and faithfully

[14] Jensen, *Revelation*, p. 147.

applies the word to the contemporary context. William Cunningham comments:

> he is the greatest and best theologian who has most accurately apprehended the meaning of the statements of Scripture,—who, by comparing and combining them, has most fully and correctly brought out the whole mind of God on all the topics on which the Scriptures give us information,—who classifies and digests the truths of Scripture in the way best fitted to commend them to the apprehension and acceptance of men,—and who can most clearly and forcibly bring out their scriptural evidence, and most skilfully and effectively defend them against the assaults of adversaries.[15]

Cunningham recognises that the task of the theologian is not only to understand the word for himself, but also to communicate it in a way that appeals to the audience. As a theologian, the speaker in the assembly has this task too. He finds words that bring delight to the audience for his message must have the design of eliciting increased devotion to God among his hearers.

> The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. (vv. 11-12)

Scripture attests to its completion and perfection. This revelation of Jesus Christ is complete, and so no word is to be added or taken away from it (Revelation 22:18-19, cf. 1:1). Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35) and Christ's word is fixed (Matthew 24:35). It is given by one Shepherd.

Scripture has one divine author and various human authors. Several New Testament texts teach us that authors of the New Testament were conscious of writing Scripture. John seems to be aware of his writing Scripture, for he often refers to Scripture as what is 'written' (John 2:17; 6:31, 45; 8:17; 10:34; 12:14, 16; 15:25) and concludes his letter by saying 'these things are written' (John 20:31). Peter refers to Paul's writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:16) and Paul refers to Luke as having written Scripture in 1 Timothy 5:18, 'For the Scripture says…. "The labourer deserves his wages."' He quotes Luke 10:7.

Various texts in the New Testament attribute Scripture to God which at first may appear to originate from the human author. In Matthew 19:5 Christ attributes Genesis 2:24 to God even though those words are not attributed to him directly in Genesis 2. Several examples can also be

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[15] W. Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1866), p. 296.

found in Hebrews, many of which are quotations from the Psalms.[16] It would be implausible to argue that the verses cited from the Psalms are isolated incidents of inspiration in the Psalms. The texts are referenced in Hebrews because they are the inspired verses relevant for the letter's argument. The implication of the author's use of the Psalter is that further portions are inspired. The writer to the Hebrews does not state the extent of inspiration in Scripture, but it is stated in 2 Timothy 3:16, *all* Scripture is God-breathed. Indeed the letter to the Hebrews implies this. The author's view of inspiration concerning the Psalms is replicated with respect a text from the law (Hebrews 1:6, cf. Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX) and also in what he says of the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). His understanding is that God has inspired all of the Old Testament Scripture (the Law, the Prophets and the Writings). Therefore all of Scripture is available to him as God's word in the course of writing his letter.

Hebrews 4:7, quoting Psalm 95:7-8, is especially relevant to our discussion. It describes this psalm as God's saying 'in or 'through' David. We learn more of the process of the one Shepherd communicating 'through' the human authors of Scripture in 2 Peter 1:21, 'For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' This text preserves the unique quality of Scripture as inspired, for Peter is speaking about Scripture (cf. v20) and *rules out* the notion that any part of Scripture has its origin in mankind. The prophetic word that was produced, or carried, by the Holy Spirit *was not produced* by the will of man (the verb, *pherō* is used twice in this verse—to contrast the work of man and Spirit in Scripture). Scripture finds its origin in God. Paul Wells comments,

> Negatively, the prophetic word does not arise from a personal initiative and its content is not made up of human ideas. Scripture does not come out of 'someone's own interpretation'. Positively, the prophecy of Scripture exists because of the initiative of the Holy Spirit. The source of Scripture is in God himself—the prophets are God's servants—and it comes to us through the instrumentality of the Spirit.… They were not just guided or led as they wrote. The precise sense of the word 'carried along' indicates they were picked up, transported and brought to their destination by the lifting power of the Spirit.[17]

[16] Heb. 1:6 cites Deut. 32:43 LXX; Heb. 1:7 cites Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:8-9 cites Ps. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:10-12 cites Ps. 102:25-27; Heb. 3:7-11; 4:5, 7 cite (from) Ps. 95:7-11.

[17] P. Wells, *Taking the Bible at Its Word* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2013), pp. 107-8.

2 Peter 1:21 informs us concerning the writing of the word of God and inspiration. Inspiration is accomplished through a variety of means for God has spoken in diverse ways (Hebrews 1:1). Inspiration—the carrying by the Spirit—is achieved diversely, it can be by speaking through a servant, or by dictation (cf. Jeremiah 36:27-31), or through the research of his chosen gospel author (cf. Luke 1:3). There are various ways in which God inspires his word.

Divine authorship means Scripture has a unique quality that binds it together as one and sets it apart from all other literature. At the same time it is a collection of books with various human authors. When we think of the production of Scripture, divine authorship takes theological precedence ahead of its human authorship. For the decision to write Scripture does not originate in humanity, but in God. The primacy of divine authorship and its implications for Scripture has fallen out of view today and urgently needs to be recovered.[18]

The use of the shepherd motif in Ecclesiastes implies God's authority and the hearer's responsibility to submit to it (cf. Psalm 23:1-4). There is a cost that follows disobedience, 'for the words of the wise are like goads'. Christ used a similar expression when he confronted Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul was living against Christ and consequently 'against the goads' (Acts 26:14). Submission to Christ is not without pain but the outcome is glorious—the believer shares in the life of Christ (Romans 8:13; 2 Corinthians 4:11).

The preacher must be aware of the boundaries of revelation, the limits of what God has revealed. Instruction is given to 'beware of anything beyond these'. J. I. Packer follows Calvin and refers to God's revelation as a light. The task of the theologian is to study all that the light reveals. But to venture outside of light is to speculate, and 'Speculation corrupts—

[18] One instance is a recent paper by Steve Chalke. He argues the unifying principle of Scripture is not God, but human limitation, fallibility and life-changing experience or encounter of God. Hence he thinks it is 'misleading to think of the Bible as a book… it is more accurately a collection of texts' and he rejects the doctrines of infallibility and inerrancy. His view is that the Bible is inspired, but this seems to be in the sense of divine influence upon the writers of Scripture rather than an act of God by which he commits his word to writing through human authors. This amounts to the view that Scripture should be taken seriously and treated respectfully, but he does not hold that it is the authority in matters concerning faith and practice. See S. Chalke, 'Restoring Confidence in the Bible' (privately published, 2014; <https://www.oasisuk.org/theology-resources>), pp. 5-6, p. 10 fn. 9 and p. 12 fn. 15.

every time'.[19] Paul's concern for the church in Corinth is, 'that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written' (1 Corinthians 4:6). He is not denying the use or value of other literature. Instead he is affirming that the Scriptures stand alone as the authoritative written word of God. These writings are from God, and therefore must be considered for what they are, [*ta*] *hiera grammata*, 'the *holy* Scriptures' (2 Timothy 3:15).

> The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (vv. 13-14)

The way to live is in accordance with the word. The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. How may we know God and his commands, that we may fulfil our duty? We read in Psalm 119:105 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' The word provides us with direction to Christ for salvation. It does so because its light is Christ; it is his word. The sheep hear the voice of the shepherd speaking, and follow him (John 10:27). Therefore he gives his word for faithful proclamation and practice.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we have found that God is the essential principle of all knowledge concerning himself. We have seen that knowledge of God requires God's self-revelation. It is diversely received in general revelation and special revelation. For clarity concerning both general and special revelation we must turn to Scripture, which provides us with the knowledge of God. The word of God must be accompanied with the inward work of the Spirit of God to be accepted. The word is reliable as God's revelation, because it is his word; he has breathed it out. Consequently it cannot be turned aside upon faith in Christ. For it is not only the means by which we come to know Christ, but it is also the means by which Christ makes himself known to us.

[19] J. I. Packer, 'Doctrine of God: Revelation and Reason', Lecture at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, 1986; available from <http://www.wts.edu/resources/media.html>.

The Word as Seed: New Birth and Discipleship

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When I was a child we used to drive along a road with a line of very distinctive trees. As soon as I saw them coming I would be on the lookout for a carved wooden notice, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3, AV). Someone hoped those words from the Bible would act like a seed taking root in the heart of a passer-by and lead them to being born again and becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

When I was a UCCF staff worker in the 1970s we regularly had Norwegian students attending our annual conference. The Norwegian movement was one of the founder members of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. They liked to send delegates but usually sent a staff worker to watch over them in case British teaching about 'being born again' would be 'unhelpful' or 'confusing' to their students. I had not given this much thought in recent years until I read 'Born Again: What did Jesus mean?' by the Baptist NT scholar, Alastair Campbell.[1]

Campbell argues that evangelical theology often narrows down the point of reference for the term 'new birth', to a moment of internal action by the Holy Spirit and raises expectations of sudden character change that can lead to disillusionment. He suggests we should understand the term to include outward as well as the inward ways the Spirit works in conversion.

NEW BIRTH—NOT AN OLD TESTAMENT TERM

There is a relatively small amount of biblical material that uses the theme of new birth. Most of the New Testament words or phrases referring to our salvation have substantial roots in the Old Testament: redemption, freeing from slavery, atonement through shed blood, washing away of sin. But with birth we draw a blank, apart from a phrase in Deuteronomy 32:18, 'you [Israel] forgot the God who gave you birth,' a reference to the origin of the nation.

There are, of course, OT promises of renewal. God promises through Ezekiel (36:26) to replace a heart of stone with a heart of flesh and put his Spirit within us. Heart in Hebrew is a word for mind, emotion and

[1] R. Alastair Campbell, *'Born Again': What Did Jesus Mean?* (Grove Biblical Series 66; Cambridge: Grove Books, 2012).

will, the centre of our inner consciousness. Hard hearts are unresponsive to God or refuse to obey him. So God replacing a heart of stone with a heart of flesh suggests an inward experience, a heart that responds to the good news of Christ and turns to God in repentance and faith. Theologians have linked the word 'regeneration' with this verse but, although that term basically means 'reborn', the Latinized form of the word tends to distance us from the imagery of birth. Look up 'born again' on Google and you get theological sites. Look up regeneration and you may get town planning. So the first clear connection between new birth and conversion comes in John 3.

BORN AGAIN OR BORN FROM ABOVE

There is a trailer for the theme in the prologue (John1:12). Jesus gives to all who receive him the right (or authority or power) to become the children of God. We do not have that right through natural descent or any human will or decision. The God who sent his uniquely begotten Son also in some sense begets those who believe in the Son and they are *ek theou egennēthēsan*, born of God (1:13).

In the conversation with Nicodemus the same verb is used in the phrase *gennēthē anōthen* which has the double meaning of 'born again' or 'born from above' (John 3:3, 7). Nicodemus is a Pharisee and member of the ruling council. He belongs to the class of people who sent interrogators in John 1 to check out John's authority to baptise. In chapter 2 Jesus in Jerusalem is questioned about his authority to clean traders out of the temple. The conclusion of the chapter is that 'many in Jerusalem saw the signs and believed in Jesus' name but Jesus would not trust himself to them—he knew what was in a man' (2:23–25). That alerts us to notice that one of those people, who has seen the signs and is in some sense a believer, is Nicodemus who comes to talk with Jesus at night: 'We know that you are a teacher come from God—no one could do the signs you are doing if God were not with him.' (3:2) And Jesus responds with 'no-one can see the kingdom of God without being born again [or, born from above]'.

John, the evangelist, structures his presentation of Jesus round significant events or conversations from which flow discourses that usually have a strong image at their centre. At one level these are accessible, able to appeal to people coming fresh to the gospel. But there are also layers below the surface and one of these layers is a conversation with the Judaism of his day. Living water, bread and light, good shepherd: all have significant resonances with temple worship or feasts or Jewish leadership. Where does birth fit into this pattern?

The answer would seem to be that Nicodemus has been born into Israel; he assumes he is a member of God's congregation or *ekklēsia*, the word we translate as church. As a Pharisee he lives by a system that ensures he keeps God's law meticulously, so he expects to be one of the people to whom the messianic kingdom of God will come. Probably the question on his mind is, 'When? ` But Jesus, in effect, says the question is 'Who?' Flesh only gives birth to flesh; you must be born again, born from above to see the kingdom of God. The Spirit of God blows like the wind where it wills. You cannot control it, you cannot see it but you can see its effects. And Jesus expands it with, 'You must be born of water and the Spirit (3:5).'

THE CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM

Much ink has been spilt dismissing the idea that we are intended to see a connection with baptism in this phrase 'born of water and the Spirit' but the indications are very strong. Jesus has already been described as the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33). As the discourse ends (3:21), it is immediately followed by a description of Jesus and his disciples baptising with water.

John has been asking Jewish people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah by repenting and acknowledging their repentance publicly by baptism. Jesus' challenge to Nicodemus is: will he take this public step that involves humbling himself in repentance. Will he admit that despite his efforts at righteousness he needs cleansing? Will he look to God to provide a way of salvation as his ancestors in the desert recognised their dire need, looked in faith to the snake on the pole and lived.

Throughout the book of Acts we see that repentance and faith in Jesus is confirmed or sealed in public baptism and from our earliest extant Christian writings after the New Testament the language of being born again is strongly associated with baptism. When you pass through the water in baptism the visible action is a sign pointing to being cleansed from sin and born into a new life in which you can see the kingdom of God—God active and reigning.

There is a subtle difference between thinking about birth as the beginning of life, the moment of breathing, or thinking about it as emerging into the world. We increasingly live in a society that tries to push God out of the picture and recognise only what can be experienced through our five senses. So it is exciting to know we have been born into an enlarged world in which the living God communicates with us in ways that include yet surpass those senses.

BORN OF GOD IN 1 JOHN—LIVE UP TO WHAT YOU ARE

The epistle that makes most use of the theme of birth is 1 John, nine times within six verses.[2] The elder John writes in a cyclical rather than a linear style—typical for instance of an African rather than a European sermon. He keeps returning to key themes interwoven with each other and one of them is that we are 'born of God', the phrase from the prologue of John's gospel.

In 1 John 3:9 the metaphor is developed by linking it with the seed that begets: 'No-one who is born of God sins (or continues to sin) because God's seed remains in him.' The Greek *sperma* is both seed in the farming sense or the sperm that leads to biological conception. Jesus, of course, loved the farming metaphors. In his parables about the kingdom of God he speaks of the seed which is the Word that produces life and growth. John has begun his letter by describing Jesus as the Word of life (1:1, 2). For those who hear and receive the Word, God takes the initiative. God begets and what is begotten has the genetic likeness of God.

In his references to 'born of God', John interchanges subjects and predicates. Sometimes anyone who is born of God is or does this; at other times anyone who is or does this is born of God. Howard Marshall concludes 'there is a one-to-one correspondence between those who are born of God and those who do what is right [2:29], love one another [4:7], believe in Jesus [5:1], overcome the world [5:4], and refrain from sin [3:9; 5:18]'.[3]

Inevitably we wrestle with these statements because John puts it in such emphatic, ideal terms. Each of these verses tells us what is appropriate for someone born of God. They do not offer a lower standard than perfection. But the same letter is quite emphatic that we do fall short. If we don't recognise that, we deceive ourselves. We have to go on confessing and being forgiven (1:8). Being 'born again' means God has made a new beginning in our lives and the rest of our discipleship is about claiming God's power to enable us to live up to it.

I cannot remember any moment of being converted. As a nine year old I was very troubled about being cross or irritated with my brother and surreptitiously undermining him. I worried that I was 'not saved'. I am deeply grateful to the young worker at the CSSM beach mission who talked with me about this at a 'sausage sizzle' in the sand hills. She read 1 John 1:9 with me and helped me confirm that I did believe in Jesus. I could go on confessing sins that troubled me and know I was forgiven.

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2 1 John 2:29; 3:9 (twice); 4:7; 5:1 (twice); 5:4; 5:18 (twice).

3 I.Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 186.

The incident also provided a story to tell if I was asked to give a testimony about being born again.

BORN THROUGH THE LIVING WORD OF GOD IN 1 PETER

The other epistle that has more than one reference to new birth is 1 Peter. Twice in chapter 1 he uses a composite verb *anagennaō* meaning '[cause to] be born again'. It takes a prominent place in the opening doxology (1.3): 'God has caused us to be born again into a living hope.' It happens through the resurrection and it has a forward looking emphasis. The new life is lived looking forward to what is to come. The readers know that God is judge, to be viewed with reverent fear, but they also know they have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus who is raised and glorified. So they have purified themselves … 'for they have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God' (1:23). Here we have the clearest linkage between being born again, the seed that causes it, and the word of God. And it comes in a chapter that makes it clear what Peter means by the word of God. He insists that the writings of the prophets that he grew up knowing as 'the scriptures' had been predicting and interpreting the events that find their climax in Jesus (1:10-11). The word of God is found in the Hebrew scriptures and in the words and deeds of Jesus. That word is active and enduring; it is the seed that causes us to be born again.

So Peter now urges them to clean out malice, deceit, envy, hypocrisy. These character flaws have not been automatically cleaned out by the process of new birth. The believer is to set about getting rid of them; to behave like new-born babies craving spiritual milk. As we saw in 1 John, so this epistle holds out a high view of what it means to be born again but sees it as the incentive to be active in cleaning out sin and cultivating holiness. Of course Peter has made it quite clear from the start that this process of sanctification is presided over by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2).

PARALLELS WITH BAPTISM

Neither 1 John nor 1 Peter make any direct linkage between new birth and baptism. What we do get later in 1 Peter 3 is a glimpse of Peter's view of baptism. As Christ passed through the waters of death to resurrection so we pass safely through death to resurrection life, like Noah in the safety of the ark, the antitype of baptism. This baptism saves you, says Peter, but not the mere physical action, not the removal of dirt. We can detect here echoes of Jesus' words insisting that rituals of washing, however much commanded by God, do not deal with the inner pollution of the heart.

The candidate presented for baptism, repenting for sin and believing in the death and resurrection of Christ, is communicating with God about a clear conscience. The communication is either 'making an appeal to God', or 'receiving a pledge from God' (3:21). Translators find it hard to choose between these interpretations since both would be expected to take place in baptism.

Howard Marshall says of this verse: 'We should not make the mistake of limiting the significance of *baptism* to the precise moment and action of being immersed or sprinkled with water. Rather, for Peter, the word "baptism" symbolically represents the whole process by which the gospel comes to people and they accept it in faith.'[4] And that seems also to be the view that best fits the texts about being born again, born of God, or born through the Word. New birth has the same comprehensive significance. It is one term for the whole process of initiating us as Christians and this is why it has been so closely associated with baptism throughout Christian history.

FIRST FRUITS OF THE REBIRTH OF CREATION—JAMES AND MATTHEW

There is one reference to new birth in the epistle of James. He uses a word with a different root for begetting, *apokueō*, but it is the same image as the words related to *gennaō*. He says the Father 'chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all that he created' (1:18). He is closely connecting birth and harvesting, reminding us of Jesus' teaching about the word as seed. But the way he puts it also draws attention to the one place in the synoptic gospels where Jesus speaks of rebirth, Matthew 19:28. 'We have left everything to follow you,' says Peter. 'What will there be for us?' 'At the rebirth of all things', replies Jesus, 'when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you will sit … and inherit eternal life.' Here rebirth translates *palingenesia*—quite literally, being born again. The people in the new congregation of Jesus the Messiah are the advance harvest looking forward to all things in creation being born again.

REBIRTH IN PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS—THE WHOLE OF SALVATION

The number of references to new birth in the epistles is small because the majority are written by Paul and he normally does not use that language.

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[4] I.Howard Marshall, *1 Peter* (IVP NT Commentary Series; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 130 (italics in original).

He uses his own distinctive image of 'adoption', a familiar process in the Graeco-Roman world, to convey that united with Christ we are brought in to the family of God where we are welcomed and loved and disciplined and commissioned for service.[5]

He also uses a variety of expressions to say that something new has happened; a new kind of life has begun. You were dead, lifeless: now you are alive, you have been raised. In Romans 6:1-5 this new life is firmly linked with baptism. And Paul echoes James' use of the harvesting metaphor. We are first-fruits, pointing forwards to the grand harvest, the recreation of all things (Rom. 8:21-23).

So new birth is not Paul's way of expressing what happens to us. But there is a little gem in Titus 3:4-7 which is a gospel summary with all the great Pauline themes: salvation, justified by grace, heirs, hope of eternal life. In the middle of it comes the phrase, 'He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit'. *palingenesia*, the word from Jesus in Matthew referring to the rebirth of all things, is linked here with washing and the very Pauline idea of renewal.

Calvin, in his commentary on Titus 3:5, writes: 'I have no doubt that there is at least an allusion here to baptism and, I have no objection to the explanation of the whole passage in terms of baptism; … because baptism seals to us the salvation obtained by Christ.'[6]

From this survey of the biblical references we see that new birth is one of the expressions used by Jesus and the apostles to describe what God does for those whom he calls to repentance and faith in Jesus, though not an especially prominent theme. It certainly challenges any who think they are automatically God's people by physical birth. It conveys the idea that there is a new kind of life to be started and a new family to enter and an enlarged world in which we are aware of God to be active and reigning. So it embraces both internal changes in the mind and heart of the new convert and external or social changes involved in public acknowledging that and accepting fellow believers as brothers and sisters. In other words it embraces all that is signified in Christian baptism.

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5 See further on this theme, F. Lyall, 'Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88/4 (1969), 458-466; *idem*, 'Metaphors, Legal and Theological', *SBET* 10/2 (1992), 94-112.

6 John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, trans. by T.A. Smail (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, 10; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 382.

THEORY *VERSUS* PRACTICE

There is a story that circulates in the prison service. Some prisoners had broken out on a prison roof and were maintaining a protest there. The senior officers were sitting round a table discussing how to deal with it. One of them said, 'We had this problem in the last prison I worked in. We decided to play the fire hoses on them. It made them wet and uncomfortable and also the roof became slippery so it was harder for them to sit on it. In the end they just gave up.' At this point, one of the mandarins of the prison service spoke up, 'That sounds all very well in practice but will it work in theory?'

Given the history of Christian faith in this country, we all struggle with the practise of baptism, who do we baptise and when? It is a great excitement and joy when someone comes along with a new found faith in Christ, unbaptised and eager to make a public confession and be welcomed into our church. But many of us have a more complicated relationship with the Church and with faith in Christ which may have started early in life. I rarely hear a reference to baptism in a sermon unless it is at a baptism service. We sometimes seem to downplay the public and outward identification with Christ and his church which is very clearly signalled in baptism.

The divisions in the church make this almost inevitable. 'Which part of the divided Christian community is this convert is going to identify with?' may seem a question too delicate to be addressed early-on. But diminishing that link has allowed reformed theology to narrow down new birth to an inward experience and develop a theory that distinguishes regeneration from adoption. The distinction is too sharp. Surely this is a case where different human authors in the New Testament use different terms to say similar things and the variety of overlapping images is helpful because of the variety of contexts in which the gospel is presented. New birth, for instance may be particularly hard hitting for someone who thinks being a Christian is their birth right, as we saw in John's gospel.

NOT A HEAD START IN HOLINESS

Campbell maintains there is a tendency for preachers who make this distinction to attach to a 'regenerated' heart an expectation of immediate character change.[7] Expressions like 'radical change' or 'supernatural change' are used. We would all agree that conversion is supernatural in that it is the work of the Holy Spirit but the word can raise an expectation

[7] See footnote 1.

of something inevitably dramatic and discontinuous in how I think and feel and behave—some kind of head start in holiness.

I am sure we can all think of people who had an experience of conversion that did produce immediate dramatic effects in their mood, their attitudes and their behaviour. It is the evangelist's privilege to see many of God's miracles, the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. But believing that God is at work need not preclude us from discerning the psychological elements in what was happening. If huge cognitive and relational changes were involved in this person identifying themselves as a Christian, there may be visibly dramatic effects. Falling in love can lead to temporary behavioural changes which wear off to be replaced, one hopes, by the deeper, more lasting experience of faithful love. Similarly some of the dramatic effects of a conversion may wear off as the convert becomes used to the new way of thinking and the new relationships that have been formed. Other changes may become embedded from the start and remain.

For many Christians there is no obvious radical or dramatic change even if they can pinpoint a moment repentance and faith. And for some there is no definite memory of when they first turned to Christ in repentance and faith. The ways in which the Holy Spirit unites a person with Christ are so varied they defy our attempts to reduce them to a theory or a pattern.

One of the writers that Campbell takes issue with is John Piper whose book, *Finally Alive*, looks at all the material on new birth.[8] Campbell claims that Piper does not specifically say it means a change in character. Piper's characteristic phrase is that new birth is about 'experiencing the supernatural in yourself'. But the impetus behind the book was a report with statistics suggesting that Christians who say they are born again are just as likely as others in society, to divorce, to have premarital sex, to be colour prejudiced and so on. To Piper these statistics prove we have lots of people in our churches who never were born again. So, in effect, he believes new birth does involve a predictable level of character or behavioural change.

Those of us who have been involved in pastoral ministry over a number of years must be all too aware how sinful behaviours among church members tends to mirror what is going on in society as a whole, with new problem areas such as internet pornography emerging all the time. I am sure, like me, you can think of people who, say fifty years ago, were sure they were born again but perhaps twenty years ago were part of the statistics that would have convinced John Piper that they were not.

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[8] John Piper, *Finally Alive: What Happens When We are Born Again* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2009).

And thankfully some today are once again faithful and prayerful in their walk with Christ, though perhaps not worshipping in the churches that had written them off for their failures.

NEW BIRTH AS A CHANGE OF IDENTITY

Campbell suggests it is more helpful to think of new birth as a change of identity rather than radical change of character. Who am I? I am a sinner who has been pardoned, I have been united to Christ, I am adopted into God's family, I have been set free from slavery to sin. I have been called to be Christ's disciple; I am a member of Christ's church. I have God's Spirit in my heart. All these overlapping images describe that I have been born again. This is what God has done.

When a baby is born, it enters the world and gets a name, an identity. Growth and character formation all lie ahead though very rapid growth would be typical in the early stages. In the Christian life it is the knowledge of our identity which is the key to the way of holiness. God has welcomed us into his family and given us his Spirit to produce the fruit such as love, joy and peace in us. As we saw in 1 Peter, in 1 John, in Titus the summaries of who we are and the declarations of what God has done for us are set in the midst of words that exhort us to be what we are:

- John says: You are born of God, God's seed is in you, you cannot go on sinning—it is completely inappropriate.

- Peter says: You have been born again of imperishable seed. What about this malice, this deceit, this envy? Spew it out and drink in something wholesome that gives you the taste of how good God is. Grow up in your salvation.

- Paul tells Titus: You are ministering in Crete where the culture is notoriously dishonest, violent, gluttonous and lazy. Keep reminding your people of the grace and love of God and the meaning of their baptism and urge them on to do what is good and not to live unproductive lives.

GROWING UP – DISCIPLESHIP

If being born of God sums up our identity—who we are as Christians—then the question arises: how do we live that out? What shape does it give to our lives? Recently churches and other Christian organisations have been focussing on discipleship as the headline that sums it up. Jesus' disciples were followers and learners. They were not learning alone, but with companions. They learnt as they were going and talking and doing. They were learning positively from Jesus and from each other but significantly

they were also learning through mistakes, getting it wrong. The failure of the disciples is a running theme in Mark's gospel.

A wide variety of themes are embraced by discipleship. Jesus showed his disciples how to use the scriptures, quotations, allusions, stories. He showed them and taught them how to pray. He taught them about the virtues, love, humility, how to apply God's commandments. He taught them to resist the attractions of financial security, sexual conquest, dominating others. He drew them into his mission to heal the sick, release people from evil, have compassion for the poor and preach good news. He taught them to live looking forward to resurrection and a future when God will renew all things but meanwhile to recognise that God's reign had begun in what he was doing.

The Evangelical Alliance in England reckons that a 'discipleship deficit' is a key challenge facing the church today and they are currently gathering significant leaders from across the UK to work out how to move forward. My own perception is that the picture is patchy. We are quite good are creating discipleship where there is a team with an identifiable task: for instance students in Christian Unions, the people in a church who run a youth activity or a holiday club, ministry candidates in colleges. Groups like this often model themselves quite closely on the patterns in the gospels and they represent a highly significant period of growth for the Christians who are part of them. But we fall down at the point of sustaining discipleship for people whose time and energy are fully stretched in the work place. I remember when I was in my early forties being bemused and alarmed by the number of people I knew who were changing churches and even dropping out all together at this point. The reason seemed to be two-fold. On the one hand, the churches they had been worshipping in and serving for twenty years were saying so little about the issues and challenges they faced at work and giving so little support. On the other hand, it was making them feel guilty if they did not take on more and more roles in church.

CONCLUSION

Paul wrote that he was confident that God 'who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6). For those who are born of God there is a vast world to explore in which God is living and active. We want to discover more and more of the power of the Spirit and be rooted in love. But we also have to discover God's purpose for us in our struggles, in our failure and in the routine and mundane aspects of our lives—to see the kingdom of God in all its wide variety.

Scottish and Evangelical Elements in the 1915 Nyasaland Uprising (Part One)

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'STRIKE A FIRST AND LAST BLOW'

In the night of Saturday, 23 January 1915, a small group of African Christians in the British crown colony of Nyasaland [Malawi] rose against the colonial regime. One band of insurgents, armed with sticks and spears, marched from their base at the Providence Industrial Mission [PIM] at Mbombwe and attacked the headquarters of the nearby Magomero Estate, which was owned by A.L. Bruce, a Scottish planter married into the family of the great missionary-explorer David Livingstone who had explored the region fifty years earlier. Another group crept up on the town of Blantyre intending to seize the weapons and ammunition necessary to rid their land of European presence. At Magomero, the rebels murdered the plantation manager W.J. Livingstone and several other European staff. Livingstone was also related to David Livingstone, but the Africans knew him as a vindictive *bwana* [boss] who administered Bruce's vast plantation with a violent hand. After taking the European wives and children to safety, they returned singing *Akhristitu limbikani* [Onward Christian Soldiers] to PIM where their pastor, the Baptist minister John Chilembwe, was orchestrating the attacks. Chilembwe led worship the next morning with Livingstone's decapitated head impaled on a stake at the front of the sanctuary, exhorting his congregation that the kingdom of God was at hand. As they waited for news from Blantyre, Chilembwe called on surrounding chiefs to rise in support of his rebellion, and later sent a runner to the authorities in German East Africa [Tanzania] to entreat help from Britain's wartime foe.[1]

Against the backdrop of the Great War's East African stage, the colonial administration reacted swiftly. Within a few days local militia and soldiers of the King's African Rifles had overrun PIM and quelled pockets of resistance in the countryside. Most of the rebels, wrote a contemporary (with romantic garnish),

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[1] See P. Cole-King, 'Letter to John Chilembwe', *Society of Malawi Journal* 54 (2001), pp. 1-21.

> were captured and brought to judgement. A great number were condemned to death by hanging on a scaffold and others were fired upon by a volley. Certain of them were sentenced to life...They all died bravely, singing hymns to their Great God…[2]

Chilembwe had fled into the bush but was shot dead some weeks later as he attempted to cross into Portuguese East Africa [Mozambique]; he was buried in an unmarked grave on official orders to forestall any posthumous veneration of him and his cause.[3]

Thus ended what came to be known as the Nyasaland Uprising or the Chilembwe Rising. While it is difficult to determine conclusively what incited Chilembwe to lead an uprising at that precise moment, or exactly what he hoped to accomplish from it, it is not difficult to grasp the sources of fury and frustration embedded in colonial Nyasaland that pushed him and his followers onto a path of violent opposition: economic disadvantage, racial discrimination, and thwarted ambition were all general incendiaries in the 1915 Uprising, as were more specific injustices experienced daily by Chilembwe's people and congregation members, like forced conscription to the war cause, beatings with the *chikoti* [buffalo hide whip], and burdensome taxes.

> He often said he was very much sorry to see women...tied up round their stomach with a rope or a string in a now [knot] by the native *Askari*; as that was the system done in those days by the *Boma* [magistrate] …to arrest women for not paying hut tax.[4]

Chilembwe appears to have acted pre-emptively on the night of 23 January 1915. Sources indicate that he was (wrongly) expecting that PIM would be attacked by government troops to silence his criticism of Nyasaland's involvement in Europe's war.[5] Other sources suggest a motive of redemptive sacrifice.[6] For the sake of his suffering people, Chilembwe seems to

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2 G. Mwase, *Strike a Blow and Die: A Narrative of Race Relations in Colonial Africa*, ed. by R. Rotberg (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 46-7.

3 D. Stuart-Mogg, 'The Identification of John Chilembwe's Body and its Secret Burial', *Society of Malawi Journal* 61 (2008), pp. 42-50.

4 Mwase, *Strike a Blow and Die*, p. 27.

5 Revealed by statements made to the Commission of Inquiry, Malawi National Archives File S/10/1/2.

6 Among the possessions seized by government troops when they attacked PIM was Chilembwe's well-marked personal copy of H. Adams, *David Livingstone: The Weaver Boy Who became a Missionary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895) with this inscription on its inside cover: 'Greater love has no man than

have sought 'to strike a first and last blow and then all die by the heavy storm of the whitemen's army'.

> The whitemen will then think, after we are dead, that the treatment they are treating our people is almost [most] bad, and they might change to the better for our people. After we are dead and buried.[7]

Given the apocalyptic expectations held by Chilembwe and his followers, their sacrifice would be the catalyst for Christ's return in judgement and the dawn of a millennial era of equality and justice for central Africans, independent of British rule and even European presence.[8]

'A VERY GREAT FRIGHT OVER A VERY LITTLE THING'?

When compared to other indigenous rebellions in colonial Africa the Nyasaland Uprising might seem at first glance 'a very great fright over a very little thing'.[9] The Herero wars and the Maji-Maji revolt in Germany's colonies killed tens of thousands of Africans; the Zulus' Bambatha revolt was pacified by the British at large commitment of money and soldiers. But the Nyasaland Uprising was both unsuccessful and rather unspectacular. Only a handful of Europeans were killed or wounded, African

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this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). See M. Bamford, 'John Chilembwe's Book', *Society of Malawi Journal* 64 (2011), pp. 17-22.

7 As recorded by Mwase, *Strike a Blow and Die*, p. 49. Mwase's purportedly first-hand account (probably written around 1931-2) certainly stretches the similarity between Chilembwe and John Brown, whose 1859 attack on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, was hailed as a martyrdom for the abolitionist cause in America.

8 Which is not the conclusion reached by the *Report of the Commission Appointed by His Excellency the Governor to Inquire into Various Matters and Questions Concerned with the Native Rising in the Nyasaland Protectorate* (Zomba: Government of Nyasaland, 1916), p. 14, that Chilembwe wanted to erect a theocracy with himself as head.

9 G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915* (1958; reprint, Blantyre: CLAIM: 2000), p. 399, citing a contemporary South African observer. The best accounts of the Uprising are Shepperson and Price along with J. McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2012), pp. 127-46. Other important interpretations include: B. Pachai, 'An Assessment of the Events Leading to the Nyasaland Rising of 1915', in *Malawi Past and Present*, ed. by B. Pachai (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1971), pp. 114-36; and D. Phiri, *Let Us Die for Africa: An African Perspective on the Life and Death of John Chilembwe of Nyasaland/Malawi* (Blantyre: Central Africana, 1999).

involvement in the rebellion was likely less than one thousand, and overall causalities less than one hundred.[10] The official report on the Uprising issued by the colonial government emphasised the local scope of the discontent and the overwhelming loyalty of Nyasaland's 'natives', and faulted the Christian missions for agitating the normally 'docile' African. It strongly recommended the censorship of subversive evangelical literature and stricter supervision of mission schools and religious gatherings of Africans, yet the overall impression it gives of the Uprising is of an isolated episode of unrest, blown out of proportion because of perceived German connections.[11] Similarly, the powerful Scottish Presbyterian missions at Blantyre in the south (Church of Scotland) and Livingstonia in the north (United Free Church), which dominated the emerging Christianity of Malawi, uniformly condemned Chilembwe, and, in Blantyre's case, actively cooperated with the authorities to identify and apprehend suspected participants.[12] The Scottish missionaries dismissed the Uprising as motivated in large part by a 'private grudge' held by Chilembwe against the plantation boss—'the whole matter was speedily forgotten,' Revd Hetherwick of the Blantyre Mission was insisting a few years later.[13]

The Uprising has certainly not been 'speedily forgotten'. Generations of Malawians have venerated John Chilembwe as a national hero for his opposition to foreign rule and colonial exploitation. At the same time, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the 1915 Uprising in the matrix of European imperialism and emergent African nationalism. Social historians have underscored the 'class' attraction to Chilembwe's seditious course of action by those socially and economically marginalized within the system of British colonialism, like plantation workers and refugees, and have also drawn attention to Chilembwe's attempts to empower his congregation with an independent education system that

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10 Following P. Makondesa, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission* (Zomba: Kachere, 2006), p. 35.

11 *Report of the Commission…Concerned with the Native Rising in the Nyasaland Protectorate*, pp. 13, 19, 36-48.

12 Malawi National Archives File S/10/1/4.

13 A. Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre: How Livingstone's Dream Came True* (London: James Clarke and Co., nd), pp. 213, 215; similarly *Robert Hellier Napier in Nyasaland; Being His Letters to His Home Circle*, ed. by A. Hetherwick (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1925), p. 91, and W. Livingstone, *The Life of Robert Laws of Livingstonia: A Narrative of Missionary Adventure and Achievement* (New York: Doran, 1923), pp. 352-3. In her treatment of Nyasaland/Malawi in the official history of the Church of Scotland's foreign missions, Elizabeth G.K. Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1960), omits any reference to the Uprising.

would nonetheless usher them into the white-made modern world.[14] Indeed, the 'modern' or forward-looking aspect of Chilembwe's seditious course of action has been paramount in interpretations of the 'little thing' that was the 1915 Uprising. As Professor George Shepperson has pointed out, while 'former movements of African resistance to European rule had aimed at recovering old conditions rather than at creating new ways of life', the Chilembwe Rising looked *forward*: it did not invoke traditional authorities like chiefs or historic patterns of tribal power for support or inspiration, but rather summoned Africans to take their place in the 'new, non-tribal way of life which was developing'.[15]

EVANGELICAL AND PRESBYTERIAN

The 1915 Uprising is also significant as the only indigenous revolt in colonial Africa explicitly provoked by Christianity.[16] Chilembwe's vision for the future was not only utopian it was apocalyptic, millenarian, and infused with a Christian sense of racial equality and social justice. The origins and aims of this violent revolt stem in part from two Christian mission traditions—two traditions that were somewhat discordant in the context of early twentieth-century Nyasaland: (1) Anglo-American evangelical missionaries like Joseph Booth and their African converts, who taught, among other things, a robust premillennial eschatology that gave religious expression to indigenous malcontent in the colony and underscored the expectancy of many Malawians for a better world than the current colonial reality; and (2) the formidable Scottish Presbyterian missions, especially the Church of Scotland's Blantyre station that was founded in 1878 in the Shire highlands of southern Malawi and named in honour of Livingstone's birthplace.

A Scottish government minister has recently declared Malawi and Scotland as 'sister nations'. Indeed, the religious and political bonds formed in the late 1850s when Livingstone ventured through the region around Lake Nyasa remain strong and enduring to this day.[17] The story of

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[14] E.g. J. Higginson, 'Liberating the Captives: Independent Watchtower as an Avatar of Colonial Revolt in Southern Africa and Katanga, 1908-1941', *Journal of Social History* 26 (1992), 55-80; E. Berman, 'African Responses to Christian Mission Education', *African Studies Review* 17 (1974), 527-540; T. Ranger, 'African Attempts to Control Education in East and Central Africa 1900-1939', *Past & Present* 32 (1965), 57-85.

[15] Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, p. 411.

[16] A point made by McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 127.

[17] Cited in K. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland in the Talking Place Since 1859* (Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013), p. 9. Ross provides a fascinating chronicle of this relation-

early Christianity in Malawi does feature noteworthy Anglican (Universities' Mission to Central Africa [UMCA]) and Catholic presences (Montfort Brothers, White Fathers), but it is dominated nonetheless by Presbyterianism. Livingstonia and Blantyre were founded in the late 1870s to bring 'Christianity and Commerce' to central Africa by converting the heathen and subverting the slave trade.[18] No less an authority than Stephen Neill has declared them as 'certainly among the best organized missions in the world',[19] and they were at the forefront of the christianization of Malawi as well as its political and social development. In 1926 the synods created by these missions joined with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa's Nkhoma mission in the central region as the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, which today numbers its members in the millions.[20] The Blantyre Mission's influence in southern Malawi extended for beyond its church jurisdiction proper through its liberal education system and advocacy for indigenous leadership. These were factors in creating the so-called 'new men' in colonial Malawi, whose education, ability, and Christian conversion *should* have qualified them for leadership and authority in their own country, but who found themselves still on the margins of society. This cadre of 'new men' included the Baptist Chilembwe and several of his most important co-conspirators in the Uprising. When this group was agitated by the radical eschatology

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ship, which has also produced many important works of scholarship alongside Shepperson's corpus, including: J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940* (1977; reprinted, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000); T. J. Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); K. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996); A. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi* (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1996). See also the Scotland Malawi Partnership website: <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org>.

18 The African Lakes Company was started up at the same time by prominent Free Church businessmen to support the Christianizing of central Africa through commercial ventures. See H. Macmillan, 'The Origins and Development of the African Lakes Company, 1878-1908', (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1970).

19 S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 327.

20 The standard work remains C. M. Pauw, 'Mission and Malawi: The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian', (DTh thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1980). Also helpful is J. Parsons, 'Scots and Afrikaners in Central Africa: Andrew Charles Murray and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi', *Society of Malawi Journal* 51 (1998), 21-40.

propagated by some evangelical missionaries and indigenous evangelists, the result would be revolutionary.

On the centennial of the 1915 Nyasaland Uprising, focusing attention on its evangelical and Presbyterian ingredients aims first of all to appreciate a significant storyline in the mission heritages of these respective traditions. Second, it brings into relief both the unpredictability of the historical transmission of the gospel and the ambiguity of the missionary legacy in Christianity in southern Africa. Missionaries in colonial Malawi were typical of their time in expecting indigenous churches to develop as 'hind-bits broken off the block of the Western masterpiece'—as the eminent scholar of world Christianity, Lamin Sanneh, put it.[21] Yet both the millennialist message of some evangelical missionaries to Nyasaland in the early twentieth century and the educational and racial policies of the long-established Scottish missions were appropriated by indigenous Christians for their context and transformed according to their needs—indeed, even used to dissent outright from the 'western masterpiece'. Here, as so often in the history of missions, the delivery of the Christian message across cultures would have unexpected, even paradoxical, results.

'AFRICA FOR THE AFRICAN'

From the onset of the Established Church's mission to Malawi, the leading Blantyre missionaries evinced sympathetic attempts to understand the culture and world view of the peoples whom they were seeking to convert, and were steadfast advocates of racial equality between Africans and Europeans.[22] Revd David Clement Scott and his successor Hether-

[21] L. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 222. K. Ross, 'Vernacular Translation in Christian Mission: The Case of David Clement Scott and the Blantyre Mission in Malawi 1888-1898', *Missionalia* 21 (1993), 5-18, and A. Ross, '*Wokendedwa Wathu*: The *Mzungu* who Mattered', *Religion in Malawi* 8 (1998), 2-7, claim that the remarkable David Clement Scott <http://www.dacb.org/stories/malawi/scott-davidc.html>, who led the Blantyre mission from 1881 to 1898, intended an authentically African Christianity to develop, but it is difficult to know for sure.

[22] E.g. D. MacDonald, *Africana; Or, The Heart of Heathen Africa*, 2 vols (1882; reprint, London: Dansons of Pallmall, 1969); D. C. Scott, *Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language spoken in British Central Africa* (Edinburgh: FMC of the Church of Scotland, 1892). Useful summaries are A. Ross, 'The African– "A Child or a Man?": The Quarrel between the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland and the British Central Administration, 1890-1905', in *The Zambezian Past: Studies in Central African History*, ed. by

wick—who between them led the Blantyre mission for over four decades—agitated extensively for African interests: against the imperialistic *Realpolitik* of the day that would have seen southern Malawi incorporated into the territory of the slave-trading Portuguese;[23] against the Colonial Office's consideration of Cecil Rhodes' offer to finance the new protectorate under his racially-exploitative British South African Company; against the violent expropriation of land in the 1880s and 90s by the British administration and its preferential treatment of European settlers, as well as the heavy taxes introduced that compelled Malawians into indentured work on European plantations. The Blantyre Mission periodical, *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, declared in 1894:

> Our contention is that if the European take the land they practically enslave the native population. There is no law to help the native in his distress; but there is power put into Europeans' hands to force the native to work… We cannot treat this land as a conquered country.[24]

'Africa for the Africans has been our policy from the first,' declared Scott a year later.[25] Even one of Blantyre's fiercest critics, Joseph Booth—a larger-than-life presence on the religious landscape of southern Africa at that time, with links to several faith missions and holiness denominations in the vicinity of Blantyre—complimented 'the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland' for its 'admirable example' of defending African interests and training Malawians for positions of responsibility in church and society.[26]

Although the sharp tone of their criticism dulled somewhat in the new century, leading Blantyre missionaries like Hetherwick and Robert

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E. Stokes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), pp. 332-51, and T. J. Thompson, '"Brave and Honourable Gentlemen": Missionary Attitudes to African Culture and Religion', in *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot: Religious and Cultural Interaction in Malawi* (Zomba: Kachere, 2007), pp. 138-51.

23 See A. Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 268-74.

24 *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, (December 1894), p. 2. See further D. Stuart-Mogg, 'The Rev David Clement Scott and the Issue of Land Title in British Central Africa. A Transcription, with Commentary, of an Unpublished Letter Written by Scott from Portobello, Edinburgh on 5th December 1891', *Society of Malawi Journal* 57 (2004), 21-34.

25 *Life and Work in British Central Africa* (January 1895), p. 2.

26 J. Booth, *Africa for the Africans*, 2nd edn, ed. by L. Perry, (1897; reprint, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2007), p. 82.

Napier continued to defend African interests.[27] They asked searching questions about land rights in the colony for the tribes who possessed it before it had been swallowed up into European estates, as well as for the tens of thousands of refugees into Nyasaland from Portuguese East Africa who worked the cotton and coffee plantations. They expressed concern for the serf-like status of those immigrant workers, whose wages were the lowest in central Africa, and whose rent to the estate for accommodation and 'hut tax' to the government was paid in mandatory labour.[28]

Accused as 'negrophiles' by settlers and more conservative missionaries, the Blantyre Mission also showed its commitment to racial justice and equality through its commitment to develop an indigenous clergy. In the early 1890s Scott consecrated seven young men as deacons with an eye to their future Presbyterian ordination. In 1900 the three Reformed synods committed themselves in principle to African ordination, and in Blantyre two candidates—'tested by long years of service'—began formal studies under Napier in 1909 with a Kirk-approved curriculum.[29] The cautious Scottish missionaries in Blantyre and Livingstonia kept the flow of Malawians into ordained ministry at a trickle, but they did affirm that 'the ordination of a native is as real and as equal to that of a European'.[30]

'THE DRAGON'S TEETH OF EDUCATION'

The Presbyterian missions at Blantyre and Livingstonia instituted ambitious, far-reaching educational systems that aimed not only to provide practical or 'industrial' training for Africans, but also the rudiments of a classical education. A priority to education in mission was typically (though not exclusively) Scottish, owing in part to the hugely influential missiologist Alexander Duff (1806-1878), who advocated western-style educational methods and institutions that would break down the 'heathen' values of its students, even as it was forming them to be future leaders for an emerging Christian nation and its church.[31] In Nyasaland the

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27 See Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, pp. 186-7.

28 McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, pp. 128-32, helpfully summarizes the *thangata* system characteristic of the estates.

29 *Robert Hellier Napier in Nyasaland*, p. 13.

30 Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre*, p. 175. Still, Presbytery minutes in the first decades following the ordination of Malawians to ministry condescendingly use first names, e.g. 'Revd Harry', to refer to them but surnames for the Scots (Minutes of the Presbytery of Blantyre, National Archives of Malawi 50/BMC/1/2/1).

31 See I. Maxwell, 'Civilization or Christianity? The Scottish Debate on Missionary Methods, 1750-1835', in *Christian Mission and the Enlightenment*,

Scottish missions' insistence on classical education seems inexplicable at first glance: Scott and Law schemed to erect Christian universities in a country only a few decades removed from total illiteracy; 1903 school exams at Livingstonia asked Malawian students to 'describe the character of Oliver Cromwell' and 'give the rules of hypothetical syllogisms'![32] Yet this was a direct consequence of the missionaries' belief in racial equality: not only were Africans capable of learning exactly what British students did, the study of mathematics, geography, philosophy, language, and history—'one of the most valuable subjects which we can teach', argued Dr. Elmslie of Livingstonia, for 'nothing will awaken him more to the possibilities within the reach of the tribes'—was necessary for them to take their place in the modern world.[33]

Yet Presbyterian mission education carried an inherent risk to the political and religious establishment by creating potentially critical thinkers. Immediately after the Uprising, the former governor of Nyasaland Sir Harry Johnston wryly remarked that 'the missionaries have sown the dragon's teeth of education'.[34] The government Commission struck to investigate the causes of the Uprising seized on the ellipse of race and education during their interrogation of various mission representatives. Pressed by the Commission to disclose the educational policies at the Scot's sister mission at Nkhoma, a DRC missionary admitted that some Malawians were being taught theology, but quickly added: 'it is very doubtful we will ordain a native here. We are South Africans and we are dead against the natives'.[35] An Anglican father of the high church UMCA made clear to the Commission that indigenous teachers were only being used in 'bush schools' to teach 'numbers and letters', never religion or

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ed. by B. Stanley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 123-40. J. Kalapati, 'The Early Educational Mission of the Scottish missionaries in Madras Presidency: Its Social Implications', *SBET* 16 (1998), 140-155, treats Scottish mission thinking in the colonial Indian context.

32 National Archives of Malawi File 47/LIM/4/19. I owe this reference to Dr Jack Thompson.

33 *Report of the Third General Missionary Conference of Nyasaland held at Mvera, 30th July to 7th August, 1910* (Blantyre: Mission Press, 1910), p. 20. See further J. Pretorius, 'The Story of School Education in Malawi 1875-1941', in *Malawi Past and Present*, ed. by G. Smith (Blantyre: CLAIM, 1971), pp. 69-79.

34 Cited by Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, p. 380.

35 The following testimonies are transcribed in the appendix of K. Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi* (Kingston, Ontario: Limestone Press, 1977), pp. 268-77. Sadly the files at the Malawi National Archives that contain the responses to the Commission (COM 6/2/1/1-3) are misplaced or lost, so I have had to rely here on secondary sources.

other important subjects; the Marist fathers who were interviewed indicated similarly, also remarking that new Catholics were taught to always submit to Europeans, 'who are much wiser than they'. Hetherwick, however, responded bullishly to the commissioner's leading question that it was perhaps beyond African capacity to interpret the Bible apart from missionary supervision: 'a native is able to interpret the Bible as you or me'. This attitude was typical of the leading Scottish missionaries in colonial Malawi. When pushed to give his opinion if education was giving the Malawians' pretensions, Hetherwick's response was biting:

> Commission: 'Of course natives get swollen heads.'
> Hetherwick: 'As Europeans do. We have met them.'

Yet Hetherwick and Laws had good reason to be defensive of the Scottish missions' education system in their testimony to the Commission of Inquiry into the origins of the 1915 Uprising. Not only was Chilembwe a former student of the Blantyre Mission's school (although not baptised Presbyterian),[36] he had tried with mixed success to recruit to his church and cause leading Malawian Presbyterians like Revds Harry Matecheta and Stephen Kundecha (the first Malawians ordained to Presbyterian ministry), and Mungo Chisuse, Joseph Bismark, and John Gray Kufa, who were elders of the Blantyre church and pillars of the African community.[37] In fact, the Commission turned up approximately eighty suspects who had been baptized or educated at the Mission, and several of Chilembwe's closest conspirators were Blantyre products. Kufa, for example, was the pride of the Mission, having been educated as a medical practitioner by the Scots, licensed as an evangelist by the Mission for work along the Zambezi River, and ordained as an elder at the main Blantyre church of St. Michael and All Angels. To the chagrin of the Scottish missionaries, he emphasized those Blantyre ties at his trial defence—unsuccessfully: he was found guilty and hung.[38]

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[36] See Phiri, *Let Us Die for Africa*, pp. 1-10. After his death, Chilembwe's wife and children went to live with the family of Revd Matecheta, as the latter's son remembers: C. Matecheta, 'The African Ministry', Malawi National Archives File 70/CHM/1/1, pp. 11-12. See also D. Stuart-Mogg, 'John Chilembwe's Wife and Progeny', *Society of Malawi Journal* 63 (2010), 25-38.

[37] Matecheta and Kundecha's statements are included in Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, pp. 146-54. See also H. K. Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission: Nkhani za Ciyambi Cace* (Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1951), chapter 13.

[38] Malawi National Archives File S/10/1/3. See also Shepperson, *Independent African*, pp. 263-5.

PATERNALISM AND POWER

Obviously the Scottish missions did not aim to create Christians who would challenge the status quo of British Empire and western Christianity in Nyasaland. Inadvertently, their belief in racial equality, which took form in a liberal and not merely technical education, 'had significant effects on the political thinking of a colonial people', teaching them to read, think, question—a dragon's tooth indeed.[39] Consider by way of contrast the great missionary doctor Albert Schweitzer of French Equatorial Africa, who hid the newspapers detailing the carnage of the Great War from his 'houseboys' so that European authority would not be undermined.[40] The Scottish missionaries to Malawi did no such thing, and the ebb and flow of Allied war fortunes were followed with alacrity by African Christians at the Blantyre Mission and its environs.[41] Those like Chilembwe who could read of Christian Europe's internecine conflict, and witness firsthand the mounting African causalities on the front with German East Africa, the tens of thousands of porters forced to carry supplies to feed the war effort, could draw their own conclusions regarding the colonial exploitation of African resources and the supposed superiority of western Christendom. In a (censored) letter to the newspaper a few months after the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Chilembwe wrote:

> If this were a war...for honour, Government gain of riches, etc., we would have been boldly told: Let the rich men, bankers, titled men, storekeepers, farmers and landlords go to war and get shot. Instead the poor Africans who have nothing to own in this world, who in death, leaves only a long line of widows and orphans in utter want and distress are invited to die for a cause not theirs.[42]

Similarly, in his testimony before the Commission, Kundecha repeated a growing sentiment among educated Malawians that the '*Azungu* [white

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39 Mufuka, *Missions and Politics in Malawi*, p. 68.

40 A. Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (1922; London: Fontana, 1956), p. 101.

41 See chapter 10 of Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission*.

42 Cited in Shepperson, *Independent African*, p. 235; see also Mwase, S*trike a Blow*, pp. 32-3. Chilembwe had earlier criticized the participation of Malawians in Britain's colonial wars in Somaliland and the Gold Coast. The authoritative account of the Great War experience in Nyasaland is M. Page, *The Chiwaya War: Malawians and the First World War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000).

people] are nothing but they are *Nkhondo* [at war]'—a fact that the missionaries morally supported.[43]

More to the point, Scottish mission education was responsible to a large degree for creating a class of Malawians who were equipped for a modern world into which they were not permitted to enter. Racial equality was a tenet of the Presbyterian missions; cultural parity was not. 'Africa for the African has been our policy from the first', claimed *Life and Work*, which went on to say: 'we believe that God has given this country into our hands that we train its people how to develop its marvelous resources from themselves'.[44] Like many western missionaries in Africa at this time (and despite popular perceptions of the relationship of missions to imperialism) the Scots at Blantyre and Livingstonia were not unqualified proponents of British imperialism.[45] But they were typical in assuming Christian Europe's trusteeship of Africa. Africa was for the Africans, but not quite yet: the values and expertise of western Christian civilization would have to first lift up Africa so that it could stand on its own. Robert Napier expressed it lyrically in a collection of wartime verses: 'And so, as stewards true, fulfilling Britain's destiny / We dedicate our lives to live, O Nyasaland, for thee!'[46] This attitude—which was closely aligned with 'moral imperialism'—provided, in part, the moral and religious justification of Nyasaland's existence within the British Empire.[47]

Similarly, an African church would come into existence only after lengthy European tutelage. 'Our experience is that it takes a long time to make a Christian', wrote Scott.

> Africa stands with her sleeves rolled up, pounding away at the lumps she has thrown into her dough-pot, and a lot of raw kneading it takes to make that

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43 Cited in G. Shepperson, 'The Place of John Chilembwe in Malawi Historiography', in *The Early History of Malawi*, ed. by B. Pachai (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 412.

44 *Life and Work in British Central Africa* (January 1895), p. 2.

45 An incisive treatment of this relationship is B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: IVP, 1990).

46 R. Napier, *Nyasaland Numbers 1916* (Blantyre: Blantyre Mission Press, 1916), p. 5.

47 D. Woulfin, 'Slaves, Trains, and Missionaries: British Moral Imperialism and the Development of Precolonial East Africa, 1873-1901', (PhD thesis, SUNY Stony Brook, 2011), highlights the presence of slavery, Islam, and poverty in nineteenth-century East Africa as justification for British 'moral imperialism', in other words, political and economic intervention on religious or humanitarian grounds.

> initial inexperience, which comes labeled 'Christian', into anything like real Christian bread.[48]

For the Presbyterian missions in the early twentieth century, this 'kneading' required potential Malawian converts to be personally examined, extensively catechized, then tested prior to baptism—a process which typically took three or four years, and sometimes even included basic literacy as a condition. Similarly, new Christians were only admitted to the Presbyterian eldership and (after 1911) to ordained ministry after many years and after rigorous testing of knowledge and character.[49] Scott desired a 'cultured ministry' for Presbyterianism in Malawi, which would of course require extensive education and the 'civilizing' of indigenous Christians according to British—and sometimes even specifically Scottish—norms.[50]

> Houses that were square rather than round, funerals conducted without signs of visible emotion, marriages blessed with a feast of tea and scones culminating in the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' in Chinyanja were all symbols of progress as defined by Presbyterian Scots.[51]

Lay or ordained, African Christians found themselves closely supervised by the Scottish missionaries, held accountable to western Christian morals, and expected to mimic European cultural norms. The endemic paternalism of colonial Nyasaland is perhaps best symbolized in the colony's legislative assembly that was erected early in the twentieth century, which included among the representatives charged to determine Malawi's future missionaries, settlers and government officials but no African voices.

'DOUBLE JEOPARDY'

Sanneh expresses well the dilemma facing new Christians in the heyday of western colonialism as a 'double jeopardy': accepting the gospel uprooted

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48 *Life and Work in British Central Africa* (January 1894), p. 1.

49 This is brought out well in *Robert Napier in Nyasaland*, pp. 32-3

50 Scott speaks of 'cultured ministry' several times in the April 1894 edition of *Life and Work in British Central Africa*.

51 McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940*, p. 224. The Scottish, rather than merely British, ideals held by Scottish Presbyterian missions in this period is emphasised by E. Breitenbach, 'Empire, Religion and National Identity: Scottish Christian Imperialism in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries', (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2005).

new Christians from their indigenous traditions, yet they remained on the edge of colonial society and missionary Christianity because they were *indigenous* Christians.[52] There was a pronounced 'double jeopardy' in Nyasaland in the decade prior to the Uprising, exacerbated by the hugely influential Scottish Presbyterian schools which aimed to create 'modern' Africans, and the cultural and religious paternalism which these missions shared to some degree with greater colonial society. Tension was palpable in the densely populated Shire highlands (where both PIM and the Blantyre were located), where the land had been largely expropriated by European settlers and foreign missions. For many in Chilembwe's own flock, their frustration was tangible in Livingstone's refusal to allow schools and churches on the Magomero estate's three hundred square mile grounds, so as to preclude potential sources of agitation against his management. This not only offended them as Christian believers but also refused them the sense of self-progress that accompanied the erection of their own sanctuary or schoolhouse.

Above all, the Commission testimonies drew attention to the deferential removal of one's hat as an affront to the status of Africans in the colony and a touchstone of the resentment that sparked Chilembwe's call for rebellion.

> A native was often times beaten by a whiteman if he did not take off his hat off his head some thousands yards away… A native often met Shouts of *Chotsa Chipewa* [take off your hat] in every corner he could go.[53]

For Africans the wearing of European clothing like hats symbolized their equal status in colonial society as 'modern' men and women—an assumption settlers resented.

> He said 'Take off your hat, you nyani [baboon]. And I said, 'I am not a nyani. I am a human being like you'. He said, 'I will shoot you' and he pulled out his revolver. And I said, 'Shoot me! Why?' And he said 'You are a black man and I am a white man, you must take off your hat'.[54]

The official position of the missionaries was that Europeans were Nyasaland's trustees until the country was ready to stand on its own, to which they added the important belief in racial equality. But to many Malawian Christians, mission church and colony seemed to be in cahoots in keeping them on their knees. True, the Scottish missions had played a large

52 Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations*, p. 221.
53 Mwase, *Strike a Blow*, p. 30.
54 Quoted in Phiri, *Let Us Die for Africa*, p. 35.

and admirable role in defending African interests, and 'it was the Scottish missions', claimed Andrew Ross, 'who had above all produced the educated African' in the first place.[55] But in the opinion of some of those educated Africans, the Scottish Missions were inextricably bound up with European interests. This was a point made often and sharply by Chilembwe's mentor, Joseph Booth, and it would be echoed by numerous Malawian Christian critics:

> No sooner has the missionary led his convert into the freedom and light of God's word than he discerns these things and discovers we are proclaiming that which condemns ourselves and exposes the wrongs we perpetrate so shamelessly. He naturally asks why, if the missionaries be truly men of God, and not in concert with the wrong-doers, do they not solemnly and sternly denounce the authors of the evil?[56]

Revd Kundecha recalled an encounter with Chilembwe and his right-hand man, Duncan Njilima (also a product of Blantyre), where he was challenged to abandon the Mission for an independent African ministry.[57]

> And he said he did not understand the foreign missionaries when they were in the pulpit repeating the ten commandments... And he said that they said 'thou shalt not steal' and 'thou shalt not covet'. And saying that they have brought in their own government and taken the land from us.

Kundecha responded to Chilembwe's repeated exhortation 'to stand alone and work by myself', by reaffirming the inherent paternalism of missionary Christianity and colonialism: 'we ought to be with them until they took the further step of going forward'. Similarly, Matecheta recalled spending a sleepless night in argument with Chilembwe and PIM church elders not long before the rebellion. 'God gave the whites their land, and to the black people their land, so we should save our land', Chilembwe argued.

> I told them that the whites had come to help develop our country, which they denied. I told them that if I was to join them then my way was that of love. We needed to wait patiently to receive freedom and learn from what the whites had brought for us.[58]

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55 Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, p. 188.
56 Booth, *Africa for the Africans*, p. 11-12.
57 Kundecha's testimony in Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, pp. 152-4.
58 Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 37.

Such responses by leading Malawian Presbyterians like Matecheta and Kundecha (or Joseph Bismark)[59] should not be taken to imply subservience or complicity. These were intelligent men who were guardedly critical of the colonial administration, and cautiously sympathetic to their erstwhile friend Chilembwe. They too shared in the double jeopardy of colonial African Christian experience: their Christian faith had pushed them out of their home culture but their modern education, skills, and new religion could not put them into the colonial world or mission church as equal members. Could one wait for the European to take 'the further step of going forward'? Those who could remained in the missionary churches, while many of more impatient ended up at PIM, which Chilembwe had founded upon his return from the United States in 1900 as *Revd* Chilembwe, i.e., over a decade before the Scottish Missions saw fit to ordain an African.[60] This African-American Baptist-sponsored mission, with its enormous brick church building erected in 1913 a symbol of African progress and respectability, became 'the rendezvous of many Africans with an independent outlook on life'.[61] Chilembwe was a vocal advocate of racial equality in fact, not merely theory, and the hundreds of children learning at schools under PIM's auspices and those baptized at its various congregations were catechized accordingly. One visitor to a PIM school overheard children recite the catechism (significantly in English). 'Did God say that white people should be superior over the black people?' 'No, God made all alike; we are all the same before God'.[62] At the same time, the 'raw natives'—as they were dismissively called—in his congregation and community, who had often immigrated into Nyasaland from Portuguese East Africa and worked the surrounding plantations, were encouraged to send their children to school and to inculcate habits of European dress and education and good Protestant virtues like tem-

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59 See also J. Bismark, *A Brief History of Joseph Bismark* (1932), Malawi National Archives File 59/PAC/4/1.

60 Chilembwe had accompanied Booth to the USA in 1897, and with financial assistance from African-American Baptists earned a divinity degree at an African-American college in Virginia (now Virginia University of Lynchburg <http://www.virginiauniversityonline.com/ouruniversity_a.html>). He returned to Malawi in 1900 under the auspices of the National Baptist Convention, Inc. On the latter see R. Johnson, *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 360.

61 Makondesa, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission*, p. 17. This building may have been erected to rival Clement Scott's 'cathedral' of St. Michael and All Angels at the Blantyre Mission. After the Uprising the church was dynamited and PIM banned.

62 Matecheta's testimony in Ross, *Christianity in Malawi*, p. 149.

perance and thrift that would integrate and advance them in the colonial order. Employing schemes for economic cooperatives and vocational training that he had witnessed firsthand among the African-American community, and reflecting their confidence and self-determination which he had experienced during his travels and studies in the eastern United States, Chilembwe's PIM was at the hub of a expanding network of the 'new men' in the colony: educated, able Africans on the margins of a white world. It was these African entrepreneurs, educators, and professionals who were significant in the 1915 Uprising, preaching and rousing popular support the months prior, and often taking positions of strategic or military leadership during the insurgency.

In the wake of the violence of January 1915, the leading planter A.L. Bruce publically declared that the Uprising 'was a rebellion of mission trained natives' and added his voice to calls urging the government to suspend mission education.[63] Hetherwick and Laws were forced to argue extensively for the loyalty of the Presbyterian missions and the propriety of mission education. What irked them above all was that the Commission, while finally *not* suspending mission control of education, was openly suspicious of the Scots (even to the extent of circulating the Westminster Confession of Faith for its delegates to examine!) and admitted in their final report 'a certain danger' posed in 'the absence of adequate supervision religious instruction' which did not exist in the Roman Catholic and UMCA missions, but presumably did amongst the Presbyterians.[64] Perhaps the Presbyterian rebuttal protested too much, with *Life and Work* claiming:

> that Protestant methods open a door to disloyalty which is closed by Romanism and Anglicanism is a doctrine new to us and, we think, to those of our readers who know anything of Church history'.[65]

Obviously one cannot here link the Chilembwe Rising to historic Presbyterian theories of political resistance nor even to the appropriation of

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[63] Cited in Shepperson, *Independent African*, p. 35. For the Scottish missionary response to the Uprising see pp. 363-80; also helpful is K. Ross, 'Crisis and Identity: Presbyterian Ecclesiology in Southern Malawi 1891-1993', *Missionalia* 23 (1997), especially pp. 381-8.

[64] *Report of the Commission*, p. 44. N. Etherington, "Education and Medicine," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. by N. Etherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 282, notes the aftershocks of this report in Britain's colonies in southern Africa.

[65] *Life and Work in Nyasaland* (1916), p. 1, cited in Shepperson, *Independent African*, p. 373.

certain Calvinist motifs by liberationist theologians in contemporary Africa.[66] And, after all, Chilembwe and his followers were Baptists. But the Scottish Presbyterian mission had a tangible impact in creating those 'modern' Africans who were denied access to power and privilege in the colonial state that their religion, education and ability should have otherwise entitled them to, and whose resentment and frustration—growing through the first decades of the twentieth century—would be a decisive factor in the 1915 Uprising. In this sense, Shepperson put his finger directly on the ambiguity of the Scottish missionary legacy: 'It was Nyasaland's privilege and its perplexity that its taste for education had been formed by men from a country that had pioneered the spread of common schools: Scotland.'[67]

[66] E.g. J. Knox, *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558); A. Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition* (Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1984).

[67] Shepperson, *Independent African*, p. 242.

Oliver O'Donovan's *Self, World, and Time*: Introduction to the Symposium

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The articles in this issue respond to *Self, World, and Time* (*SWT*), the first volume of Oliver O'Donovan's much anticipated trilogy of moral theology, *Ethics as Theology*.[1] They were first presented at a meeting of the Tyndale Fellowship 'Ethics and Social Theology Group' held in Cambridge in July 2014 (the gathering also doubling as a postgraduate research seminar of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics [KLICE], of which Oliver O'Donovan is Honorary Research Fellow). Subsequently, Ben Paulus, a participant, prepared a detailed précis of *SWT* to frame the pieces and aid readers unfamiliar with the book, and Oliver O'Donovan, who was present throughout, wrote a response.

In the preface to *SWT*, O'Donovan laments that the latest innovations in Christian ethics too often resemble 'the unveiling of the year's new cars at the annual auto show, though with less sense of familiarity'.[2] That students of O'Donovan's earlier work will, when reading *SWT*, quickly feel themselves to be on familiar territory in no way detracts from the freshness and originality of this latest of his profound and distinguished contributions to the field.[3] For *SWT* approaches the field from an intriguingly different vantage point to that of much of his earlier writings. Whereas his first systematic work, *Resurrection and Moral Order*,[4] was marked by what he describes as a 'forceful moral objectivism', rooted in a robust affirmation of given creation order and realist moral epistemology, *SWT*, he tells us, now explores moral theology with an eye cast primarily on the 'self', the moral subject responding (knowingly or not) freely and deliberatively to that objective order. The book, he says, addresses the relation between

1 Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013).

2 Ibid, p. vii.

3 See Robert Song and Brent Waters, eds., *The Authority of the Gospel: Explorations in Moral and Political Theology in Honor of Oliver O'Donovan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

4 Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: Outline of an Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

'Pentecost and Moral Agency'.[5] He discloses that the inspiration for the book originally struck while, when reading *The Imitation of Christ* before the commencement of a Canterbury Cathedral service, he came upon a passage about how prophets sound forth words but cannot 'give the Spirit'.[6] *SWT* thus has a pneumatological focus, and opens up new theological vistas on human moral experience. We await with much interest to see how this 'subjective' angle of inquiry will be elaborated further in *SWT's* successor volumes: *Finding and Seeking* (which appeared in late 2014)[7] and *Entering Into Rest*. The contributors hope that this symposium will encourage readers of *SBET* themselves to read and critically engage with *SWT* and its two sequels. Our sincere thanks go to Oliver O'Donovan for his generous and stimulating participation in the Cambridge meeting and for writing such a thoughtful response, and also to editor David Reimer for making space in the pages of *SBET* for these pieces.

5 *SWT*, p. xii. His two major works of systematic political theology, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the roots of political theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005) might also be summed up as being marked by, respectively, a focus on the 'objectivity' of the triumph of Christ over political authorities, and a 'realist' account of how such authorities should construe their divinely given role.

6 Ibid., p. xi.

7 Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

Self, World, and Time: An Overview

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Oliver O'Donovan's *Self, World, and Time* is the first volume of a promised trilogy on 'Ethics as Theology'. The author explains in his Preface that this book is an *induction*, 'to pave the way for further "Explorations"'.[1] The book proposes, first, that moral awareness, which operates by moral thinking and is informed by moral teaching, needs to be disciplined by moral theory; and, second, that moral theory itself opens up towards theology. The book may be conveniently divided into three sections, treating, in turn, the phenomenon of moral awareness, the movement towards moral theology, and the task of moral theology.

THE PHENOMENON OF MORAL AWARENESS

In chapter 1, O'Donovan explains that practical reasoning actually needs no 'introduction' because it arises from conscious experience itself: it is 'our native element' (1). Instead of an introduction, there is an invitation to the reader to 'wake up'. Since all our experience impinges upon morality, we do not debate, theorise, and *then* act; rather, we 'find ourselves, active subjects caught up in the middle of things' (3). We 'swim in a sea of obligations, tangled in seaweed on every side…' (1). Waking, or being woken, involves recognising the moral element of our experience which has always been present to it, but it also implies the possibility of responsible agency—and this is where moral thinking begins.

Here O'Donovan makes an important distinction. Morality is not about '*what we do*, but [about] *how we think what we are to do*, which is to say, how we *act*' (3).[2] Action here is not simply about doing: it involves accepting our obligations and taking responsibility for some particular trajectory, thinking about it and weighing its merits. And if our obligations to act are not to crush us, we must, ultimately, understand our debts as being owed to God. He forgives our debts and bestows freedom for acting in the world he has made. Since such freedom is what it means to be

1 Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans., 2013), p. xi. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

2 All italics in quotations are original.

awake, moral thinking must be deeply connected to theology. Free action that is not simply arbitrary action presupposes God both as a beginning and an end.

O'Donovan elaborates this central claim in terms of the organising triad, 'self, world, and time'. It is to these realities that we awake, and attention to each is crucial for moral reasoning. By *world*, O'Donovan refers to the 'order of things that stand behind and before' us (10). Sound moral thought depends on a right understanding of this ordered world. The world, however, does not interpret itself. Philosophy, the sciences, and traditions all have their place in interpreting it, but 'Practical reason looks for a word, a word that makes attention to the world intelligible, a word that will maintain the coherence and intelligence of the world as it finds its way through it, a word of God.' (12) Recognition of the world, the objective element which sound moral reasoning requires was robustly argued for in O'Donovan's first major work of systematic moral theology, *Resurrection and Moral Order*.[3] This theme is reiterated in *SWT* but is now complemented by fuller attention to the subjective element—to *one-self*. This means being aware of the limits of our knowledge as well as the particular responsibilities we have wherever we find ourselves. Paying attention to the self involves an understanding of ourselves as 'centers of initiative' (14).

The third element of the triad is *time*: 'World and self are co-present only in the moment of time which is open to us for action.' (15) The time for which moral deliberation prepares the agent is the immediately available future. Moral deliberation should not be thought of as utopian forecasting; rather, our acting takes place in *hope*, which means, in the moment immediately before us. Hopeful action then leaves the ends to God. By engaging self, world, and time in practical reasoning, the moral agent thus begins a journey: 'Ethics', O'Donovan says, 'opens up towards theology' (19).

THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS MORAL THEOLOGY

In the second chapter, 'Moral Thinking', O'Donovan elaborates his description of 'commonsense' morality (21). Such morality simply assumes that people should act reasonably—'that our actions must fit in with how things are… [and] that we must think about what we propose to do in an ordered way' (21). O'Donovan notes that there have, of course, been other understandings of moral thinking besides 'commonsense

[3] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: Outline of an Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

morality'. Some of the persistent alternatives in the modern world have been forms of voluntarism (where moral thinking is reduced to the will's intention, divorced from an ordered description of reality) and of intuitionism (where the good or the right is thought to be self-evident).

O'Donovan rebuts these accounts of practical reasoning by proposing an account of moral thinking in which the good and the right—and, in parallel, value and obligation, and reflection and deliberation—are construed as the two poles between which a moral agent moves. O'Donovan thinks that both poles, 'thinking about' and 'thinking towards', are necessary to complete the journey of practical reason: 'One may act without thinking at all, but one cannot think-towards acting without thinking-about some truth of the world in which one will act.' (32) However, making the journey between these two poles of practical reason requires a moral agent who will take responsibility for his actions. This means becoming aware 'of ourselves as subjects of action, as those… who come to resolutions of which they know themselves to be the author and understand the weight and significance of what they do' (36).

However, the moral agent's responsibility can only be made true sense of in light of a divine call that comes from beyond the world (38). Moral thinking, then, presupposes God and culminates in 'calling on' him (38). Accordingly, O'Donovan concludes the chapter by exploring how moral thinking is related to prayer. Prayer, rightly done, trains the agent for the active life and focuses his actions on God. How does is it do so? O'Donovan points to the importance of the petition for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.' In this petition, moral agency, which was constrained by sin, is renewed; but *moral thinking* is also renewed because it allows one to *think* what she is to do under the conditions of a new creation which is in continuity with the original order and justice of God's creation rather than the conditions of sin; thus, it opens practical reason to the new creation in accordance with which the agent is free to act.

In chapter 3 O'Donovan considers the phenomenon of 'Moral Communication'. He argues that moral communication arises because personal identity is not simply an individual property; humans can only be persons within communities (44). The 'I' which engages in moral thinking is situated within a 'we' whose shared language makes such thinking possible and towards whose good moral thinking aims. O'Donovan illustrates this thesis by exploring the phenomenon of 'discussion'. Discussion may begin in disagreement, but 'If we cannot envisage a community of agreement, our thought cannot have any end in view, either.' (46) Moral thought is an essentially communal exercise.

Three forms of moral communication are considered which free the individual agent for action: '*giving advice, obeying authority*, and *moral teaching*' (49). 'Advice' is a form of moral communication because it aids the moral agent who finds herself in moral peril. Hence good advice requires 'a well formed knowledge of good and evil' (51). In seeking advice, O'Donovan proposes, one seeks an authoritative disclosure. This leads him to consider the experience of obeying 'authority' as a form of moral communication. Authority, he claims, is an '*event in which a reality is communicated to practical reason by a social communication*' (53). By describing authority as an 'event', O'Donovan seeks to highlight its decisive character as something which shapes one's action. The communication of authority occurs on two spectra: first, the spectrum of 'practical immediacy', and second, the spectrum of 'cognitive plentitude' (55). 'Cognitive plentitude' in turn has two poles: intellectual authority occupies one end, political authority the other. Neither of these types of authority, 'can be wholly authoritative without the other, and yet we have no apparent ground to suppose them complementary' (59). On one hand, the descriptions of the world which intellectual authority offers seem to lack consideration of the communal dimension of human life; on the other, the exercise of political authority often does give reason for its exercise. O'Donovan thinks a 'word from beyond' is needed to solve this tension, and this leads him to consider the paradigmatic form of moral communication: 'moral teaching'.

'Teaching', he says, 'is an act of witness to the authority which authorizes it, yet at the same time an act of nurture…. It does not consist of isolated observations or insights, but is "a teaching," a doctrine that can put us in a position to live our lives in harmony with nature and events.' (60) The paradigm of moral teaching is the Sermon on the Mount. In the same way that the phenomenon of moral thinking opens towards God as its end and requires God to make it free, so also the phenomenon of moral communication moves towards God as revealed in Jesus and is fulfilled in the prayer which is at the heart of Jesus' teaching. It is this prayer which forms 'the "we," the community of moral practice' (64).

In the fourth chapter, 'Moral Theory', O'Donovan's argument moves from a description of moral experience to a description of intellectual reflection on that experience, namely, the discipline of moral theory, or ethics. He concludes the chapter by saying what it might mean to study Ethics as Theology.[4]

[4] O'Donovan capitalises the terms 'Ethics' and 'Theology' and 'Moral Theology' throughout the book. I retain his usage.

In the first part of the chapter he considers the origin of 'Ethics' as a discipline. On his account, Christian thinkers had always treated Ethics as a part of Theology until the late seventeenth century when universities began to include a Newtonian-style 'Moral Science' as part of their curriculum. The problem with defining the discipline of Ethics, O'Donovan thinks, is that it has no object of knowledge like the other sciences; instead, 'everything is grist for its mill…. Ethics is distinct by being a *practical* discipline. That is to say, it is concerned with good and bad reasons for acting' (70). This description of the discipline of Ethics distinguishes it from behavioural sciences which reduce human action to some form of causation without asking about the '*moral reason*' for one's actions (70). This does not mean that ethics abandons description, but simply that it 'describes *trains of thought which resolve upon action*' (71). Yet Ethics is also a reflective discipline: it does more than simply describe trains of practical reason, but also reflects on them, weighing their respective merits.

Ethics, then, is a *discipline* situated between description and action—between 'science and practice.' However, Ethics is neither moral thinking (which is also situated between description and action, but is not a discipline), nor moral teaching; rather, these three (Ethics, moral thinking, and moral teaching) 'form a triangle of points of view through which reflection on reality and ordered reason are brought to bear on immediate practical discernment' (74). O'Donovan further notes that while ethics itself does not need to appeal to authority in order to reflect on trains of practical reasoning, it nevertheless 'knows that *there must be* an authority for any moral teaching', and thus can be readily 'integrated into a confession of faith which is not itself a part of Ethics' (74). While in theory Ethics can remain separate from such a confession, in reality no practitioner of Ethics can remain aloof from the question of authority, of moral norms, and thus faith. Because of this, Ethics, moral thinking, and moral teaching move toward the discipline which O'Donovan thinks can alone fulfil their aspirations: Moral Theology. And Moral Theology, in turn, includes both Ethics and Theology: 'Ethics', he says, 'needs Theology if it is to pursue its questions to a conclusion, while Theology needs a considered purchase on practical reason if it is to give an account of the regeneration of mankind by the life of God.' (76)

Having established this point, O'Donovan then proposes that to study Ethics 'as Theology' requires the discipline to be (as the Second Vatican Council put it) 'nourished on the doctrine of the Scriptures' (77). This means that Moral Theology should pay attention to the whole of the scriptural witness, because the reality to which it witnesses is the life-giving spring for moral theology. O'Donovan further explains this proposal

by suggesting that obedience to Scripture cannot be achieved by jumping straight from the text to action; but rather, true obedience to Scripture is the result of trying 'to achieve a correspondence between the *whole train of thought* of the text from A to B and the *whole* train of our thought from X to Y' (79). This is the kind of attention to Scripture which nourishes Moral Theology.

O'Donovan concludes the chapter by underlining the importance of 'a proper *vis à vis* between Doctrine and Ethics' (81). He is aware that this dialogue between Doctrine and Ethics can easily mutate in two directions: modern Protestant Theological Ethics has sometimes equated Doctrine and Ethics, while Roman Catholicism has sometimes been guilty of divorcing them. Having identified these two traps, O'Donovan proposes a third way of construing the relationship between Doctrine and Ethics. In his mind, the particular task of Moral Theology is 'in the movement between its poles….' (89), a movement unpacked further in the concluding two chapters.

THE TASK OF MORAL THEOLOGY

Chapter 5 explores in more detail the specific task of Moral Theology. The first part seeks to establish what O'Donovan calls the 'Shape of Moral Theology'. Moral theology, he says, must be 'evangelical': it must announce good news to a broken world. But how does it do this? In continuity with *Resurrection and Moral Order*, O'Donovan asserts that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead forms moral theology's centre.[5] From that strategic vantage point, moral theology looks in two directions: toward the created world and its order, and toward the future. Thus, the shape of moral theology always contains christological and pneumatological dimensions: 'The dimensions of the resurrection are what is to become of the form of the world: creation restored on the one hand, the creature led forward into new creation on the other.' (94)

In what is perhaps his most original constructive theological move, O'Donovan proposes—reviving a proposal of William Tyndale—that moral theology be decisively shaped by the theological virtues of 'faith, love, and hope'. These correspond to the natural poles of moral reasoning—self, world, and time—and they redeem the moral life by directing it towards God. Here O'Donovan articulates a vision of moral theology that seeks to stand between, and correct the limitations of, Barth and Aquinas. Barth's Ethics, in the end, left no significant place for faith, love, and hope because of his aversion to 'general moral principles' (101). Yet Aqui-

[5] O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p. 13.

nas's appropriation of the theological virtues separated them too far from the natural virtues. By contrast, O'Donovan proposes a Moral Theology which envisages self, world, and time as 'reflected and restored' by faith, love, and hope (xi).

In the final chapter, O'Donovan explores in greater depth the way faith, love, and hope should direct moral theology. The three stand in a certain order: 'faith *anticipates* hope and love, but hope and love *presuppose* faith' (105). Faith, then, is 'the "root" of morality' (106). O'Donovan here distinguishes his view of faith from the scholastic view which conceived of it primarily as an operation of the intellect. Rather, the Reformers were correct in seeing faith as something which first awakens the agent. God, who is the object of faith, is also the one who renews our moral agency: 'The root of agency lies not in self-perception, but in receiving God's address to us. That does not make it the slightest bit less practical…. It is the consciousness of being called to life by God, who tells us of our agency by telling us of his.' (112) It is such a passive-receptive faith, then, that is the root of moral agency.

O'Donovan then addresses love and its relation to the world. Just as faith is not simply an intellectual disposition, neither is love simply a disposition towards action. Rather, it includes knowledge of the world, and combines knowledge with affection. It is 'love wholly informed by knowledge….' (114). This Augustinian proposal stands in opposition to voluntarist conceptions in which love effectively posits its own ends. Strikingly, whereas in much popular Protestant ethics love is understood essentially as love between individual persons, for O'Donovan it is to be construed much more comprehensively as love for the *world*, for the entirety of God's ordered creation. It is also, of course, love for God, yet the two orientations of love are not in any kind of tension. Rather, 'Love of God is affirmed in and through our other loves, structuring them and ordering them….'(119). This orientation to the love of God ensures that Moral Theology does not lose its mooring in 'the Good', but also guarantees the moral theologian's focus on a rightly ordered engagement with the plurality of created goods, allowing her to value them correctly and pay attention to them in the right way.

Loving attention to the world, however, does not complete the work of moral theology. Such attention is incomplete without action. All moral agents find themselves situated in time, in *this moment* which faces the future. It is possible to face the future pulled to and fro by desire and by fear. Moral agency, however, requires hope: 'Hope differs from desire because it attends to a different future, the future of God's promise.' (122) Importantly, O'Donovan claims that we do not actually know the precise content of our hope, and that it is a mistake to act as if this content were

clear. For then responsibility for the future would lie in our own hands. Instead, the significance of hope for the agent is that it creates space for meaningful action because one's action is undergirded by the reality of God's promise: 'No act of ours can be a condition for the coming of God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom, on the contrary, is the condition for our acting; it underwrites the intelligibility of our purposes.' (124)

O'Donovan concludes with a final section which circles back to love, in order to consider its pre-eminence in Moral Theology. He does this by situating love in relation to the categories of 'work' and 'rest'. O'Donovan points out Paul's interest in the finality of love. 'Love is action's mode of participating in eternity.' (125) The actions one performs become objects of Moral Theology's reflection, which is to say that they becomes objects of love: 'As moral reason passes from faith to love and on through hope into action, so it must finally pass back into love again.' (125) Human action is intelligible and able to be an object of reflection because it is not action towards 'empty space' but action towards some end, towards *rest*. But this rest depends on and presupposes God's judgement, which will bring our works 'to their decisive appearance' (130). The problem with this, of course, is that our labours are always insufficient to what God demands. But it is at this point that we discover that our work has all along been the work of God and that God's final judgement means that, at last, this work finds rest. Moral Theology, O'Donovan concludes, has the task of working backwards from this promised judgement so that it can order our deliberation about what should be done here and now, in the hope that we will be ushered into that rest.

'Moral Awareness': Response to Chapter 1

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THE EXPERIENCE WE'RE GIVEN

'No introduction can be imagined for what we can never meet for the first time: conscious experience itself.'[1] The opening note in O'Donovan's work comes from Paul, in Romans 8:12, informing us that we are debtors. We encounter immediately one of the features of *Self, World, and Time* that sets it off against most other conventional treatments of Christian ethics. Whereas such treatments typically start either with a survey of the history of the field or with a discussion of methodology or some assumed biblical, theological or hermeneutical starting-points, O'Donovan begins with what might be called a phenomenology of human moral experience itself. For him, our status as 'debtors' is the first reality we must note.

Our experience of indebtedness lies already in our obligations: our signing of a rental contract, our accepting a job offer, our declaring of our love. The very narrative contours of our everyday lives oblige us. 'Obligations formed us, and we formed obligations, for as long as we ever knew ourselves.' (2) We awake into a moral world already in flow. We are caught up in the play of the moral world around us. Against various quests to find an objective and 'safe ground of knowledge of ourselves', O'Donovan declares 'there is one inevitable reply: they come too late' (2). We are already asking the questions, evaluating the decisions and acting in the moral universe to which we have awoken. When we wake, we engage in practical reason, 'the most commonplace of human rational exercises' (3). Yet mere description of our action is not yet morality. It will indeed always involve narrative, but that does not mean that narrative is itself moral thought. Morality 'arises at the tipping-point between narrative and self-awareness' (4).

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[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 1. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

THE SPIRIT

To posit our experience as 'moral' presupposes a life 'of intelligence, responsibility, and freedom' (4). This, for O'Donovan, is 'the life of "Spirit"' (4), the specific way that Christian ethics explains the givenness of our moral experience. 'Even to pose a moral question is already to tread water, to trust our weight upon the element of Spirit.' (4) That we awake indebted, that 'we owe anyone anything', is another way of saying '*being led by* "Spirit"' (4).[2] We are led as creatures, by the Spirit. This is the action of being, in a small way, like the Creator: of 'living a life that is given by Spirit and corresponds to Sprit's life' (5).

WAKING

The metaphor that O'Donovan invokes in this chapter for coming to recognise our ordinary moral experience is that of 'waking'. He grants that this is a universal metaphor, yet as he deploys it, it is a 'definite proposal' and 'that proposal is of Christian provenance' (6). Cautioning that we must be careful of the metaphors we use because of how they harden and shape our thinking, O'Donovan nevertheless reminds us that the call to wakefulness is a common metaphor deployed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet, he remarks, 'Nowhere in the New Testament do the faithful call on God to awake.' (8) God is already awake. What waits to be seen is when we will awake. This is not yet a general call to action, but a specific call for 'continual alertness'. Wakefulness in the New Testament is a description of the stance taken by those undergoing radical transformation. Thus it is used in Romans 13:11 and Ephesians 5:14 to round off passages of moral instruction with reference to resurrection. O'Donovan demonstrates this by reference to how Jesus uses wakefulness. Jesus, both in Gethsemane and in parables (Mark 13:34; Luke 12:37), draws on this image, as well as in two instances in Revelation. Taken together, we can gather that the wakeful servant will encounter the Lord as a welcome master, while 'it is the *unwakeful* servant who will encounter the Lord as a thief….' (9)

WORLD

So we wake. But to what? To life, to its direction and to the truth that makes it all possible. 'To be awake is to be aware of *the truth of a world*.' (10) The 'world's *objective truth*' is found in the fact that it is a reality that is not encompassed by my self (10). The world places demands on my inner self which I do not get to choose or shape. We can, of course, in

[2] Italics in quotations are original.

various ways ignore, misread, or manipulate the world so that we become 'idle window-shoppers on the world's high street' (10). To transcend that possibility, we have to comprehend how the world holds together, and to what end. These questions evoke no definitive or self-evident answers. Whatever answer we do propose must be informed by thorough-going description of the world as it is. 'World-description belongs ... "on the ground-floor" of practical reason.' (11)

Description, then, is a critical component of moral reasoning. How do we go about describing our world? 'What our eyes have seen and what our ears have heard is insurmountable evidence' for the world around us but it is also 'insurmountably subjective' (11). We supplement this subjective experience with empirical knowledge, drawing on 'the capacity of cultural traditions ... to assemble and interpret many experiences of reality' (12). Yet even this does not make us secure. While we cannot do without them, the conclusions of empiricism of various kinds do not resolve the problem of knowledge of the world. It is not enough to just seek out the facts, since 'as the history of science continually shows, they can frequently be contested' (12). Practical reason has an urgent (and philosophical) need to find a 'critical measure' that can 'provide us with a direction for intelligent questioning' (12). The question of the objective truth of the world cannot be entertained without God. Practical reason needs 'a word of God' (12). This word is not the final destination but the starting point and the guide by which the world is revealed as coherent and meaningful. Practical reason, even equipped with such a guide as this, still demands a *reasoner*.

SELF

To this end, the self is brought to the fore in O'Donovan's account. Practical reasoning does not engage with the world's existence in the abstract. There are only persons using their practical reason. The world by which we are claimed is *our* world. Hence, 'to be wakeful is to attend to oneself' (12). Attentiveness means bringing the world *and* ourselves into view. There is no view from nowhere. The only view open *to* any person is the view *from* that person. So as we are summoned to wakefulness to world outside us, we must simultaneously attend to our own agency. Who am I? I am an agent, 'one among many' (13). What am I to do? I am to tend to my own responsibilities. This is the foundational obligation of one who has woken.

TIME

If it is true that the moral challenge involves simultaneous attentiveness to the world and to self, then that simultaneity also demands alertness to *time*. Wakefulness can only be experienced in the present. While there are different ways to conceive of the present moment in which we find ourselves, the common strand is that 'what the present cannot be is a *period of* time' (15). As such, the present is 'dimensionless'. The moral task is first and foremost concerned with the question of '*practical* immediacy' (16). O'Donovan forces us to confront the inescapable demand of this 'future-present moment': we are 'unquestionably responsible' for this moment right before us (16). We can let the medium term, the hypothetical future and even the eschatological end pass from our attention. They do not directly claim our responsibility. 'The *available* future', however, does (17). So, instead of imagining futures, utopian or dystopian, the task before us in the available future is to 'use this moment of time to do something, however modest, that is worthwhile and responsible' (17). O'Donovan, who cautions against grasping the Kingdom while never denying that it does in fact draw near, goes as far as to hope that these small acts might 'endure before the throne of judgment' (17).

THE COMPLEXITY OF DESCRIPTION

For O'Donovan, accurate description in ethical deliberation is of the utmost importance. Failure to attend to world, self and time leads to ethical mishaps. I want to draw on aspects of the discussion around 'self' to investigate further the complexity of description.

To illustrate his point about the difficulties of failing to attend to oneself, O'Donovan speculates that 'perhaps some pathologies like autism or gender-dysphoria can be understood as an unusual difficulty in grasping oneself' (14). He grants that these are 'liminal phenomena', and what concerns him directly is 'the more common *moral failure* to attend to oneself' (14), noting the phenomenon of depression, in which we 'withdraw from agency and gaze out on the world with emotionless eyes' (12). This, he suggests, 'may present us with the phenomenon of sloth in an acute and overwhelming form' (12).

Accurate description, we have seen, is a critical component of practical reasoning. Although O'Donovan's references to autism, gender dysphoria and depression are incidental (they are prefaced by the word 'perhaps' and categorised as areas in which he has 'no special competence to judge' [13-14]), it may be worth investigating how these descriptions compare with those offered by others. What can we learn about description in general (and ethics by extension) by reading O'Donovan's specific words

alongside the accounts of medical professionals, the personal accounts of those suffering from these conditions, or the work of disability theologians?

To inform our thinking on such matters it may be worthwhile to consider the texts commonly held as authoritative; for example the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5.[3] The discussion found therein of Autism Spectrum Disorder,[4] Depressive Disorders,[5] and Gender Dysphoria[6] may cast light on our theological understanding of the self who suffers from these conditions, or likewise expose to theology the questions or challenges that it may be compelled to bring to contemporary scientific discussion. Similarly, popular accounts of living with these conditions now proliferate. There are numerous articulate and profound reflections on what it means to be a self who is depressed,[7] autistic,[8] or gender dysphoric[9] written by selves so afflicted. To what extent does our description need to engage with the claims found in such works? Disability theologians advise us that one of the most complex problems faced in that field is 'to find a working definition of disability that does not too quickly foreclose a proper investigation of what it might mean'.[10] The question of how we weigh, evaluate, and engage with professionalised accounts of psychological states or literary descriptions of lived-realities or other non-theological accounts is itself a theological endeavour. To draw on a discussion that comes later in the book, if 'advice is the assistance offered to an agent in danger' (50), might theologians be recipients (as well as dispensers) of such 'advice' when describing the agency of other selves?

Composing an account of the subjective self of the moral life is charged and complex. World, self, and time are indeed not 'self-interpreting' (11). The truth about selves cannot be read off the surface of things.

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3 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 5th ed. (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013).

4 Ibid., pp. 50-59.

5 Ibid., pp. 155-188.

6 Ibid., pp. 451-459.

7 For example, Allie Brosh, *Hyperbole and a Half* (London: Square Peg, 2013).

8 As illustrated by Naoki Higashida, *The Reason I Jump* (London: Sceptre, 2014).

9 Consider, e.g., Ivan E. Coyote and Rae Spoon, *Gender Failure* (Vancouver, B.C: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014).

10 Brian Brock, 'Introduction: Disability and the Quest for the Human', in *Disability in the Christian Tradition*, edited by Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 8.

We approach this truth in community and must heed the voices of those around us as we interpret. The wisdom that guides this process is the wisdom of Christ who is 'the centre of the world, the bridegroom of the self, the turning-point of past and future' (19). In the pursuit of the truth we 'must always be revisiting familiar places and seeing them with new eyes' (19). To see them anew, it is essential that we engage imaginatively with the experience of others.

Elsewhere, Sam Wells has described this book as 'lonely'.[11] He notes that it 'seems to hold itself in significant ways in isolation from the debates of the Church at large'.[12] While the book does not propose an abstract self held at a distance from others, it does, as these references reveal, remind us of just how fraught the task of adequate moral description is.

[11] Sam Wells, 'Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology Volume 1*', Theology 117 (2014), p. 393.

[12] Ibid., pp. 393-394.

'Moral Thinking': Response to Chapter 2

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What does it mean to say that our moral actions are 'reasonable'? After unpacking the nature of 'moral awareness' in the first chapter of *Self, World, and Time*, O'Donovan takes up the nature of practical reason in the second. The chapter begins with David Hume; it ends with readers on their knees in prayer, and not only because O'Donovan carves out a difficult path between the two. On his account, self-conscious moral thinking (eventually) makes explicit the presupposition that gives it its urgent character, namely the relation of the self to God. But O'Donovan begins with the nature of practical reasoning, and it is about this that I have questions. While his treatment is both illuminating and provocative, I wonder whether by leaving the relationship between 'values' and other aspects of reality ambiguous, he leaves insufficient room for non-culpable mistakes in action and over-burdens moral reasoning by unnecessarily throwing the weight of the uniquely 'moral' on the self. I consider these questions in what follows, leaving aside O'Donovan's stimulating section on prayer.

O'Donovan begins his account of moral reasoning by reframing the familiar question of how 'is' and 'ought' relate—or whether 'values' can be derived from 'facts'. Hume is often credited with first raising the problem, which has become known as the 'naturalistic fallacy'. Yet on O'Donovan's reading, Hume is troubled instead by how we move not from facts to values, but from values to obligations, or what 'classical thinkers knew as the question of the good and the right' (24).[1] By integrating 'values' into the very structure of reality, O'Donovan is able to argue that moral responsibility has a stake not only in willing correctly, but in understanding properly as well. As he strikingly puts it, 'behind moral failure at every level lies… [some kind of] failure to keep our actions in tune with reality' (25).

O'Donovan is clear that 'World-description belongs…"on the ground floor" of practical reason.' (11) But he leaves the question of how 'values' relate to other aspects of reality under-specified and unclear; by sidestepping the popular formulation of Hume's 'naturalistic fallacy', O'Donovan's

[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 24. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

account eliminates—or at least seriously threatens—the possibility that ignorance in moral actions might be benign. O'Donovan writes: 'Mistakes are not the high peaks of guilt, but neither do they lie on the plain of innocence.' (25) It may be true that every moral failure has some mistake about reality behind it, but it does not follow that every moral action that has a mistake about reality behind it is a failure. O'Donovan grants that 'we differentiate "mere" mistakes from bad intentions, vices of character, and so on, in an ascending scale of moral seriousness….' (25). But the quotation marks around 'mere' leave an open question about whether O'Donovan thinks non-culpable mistakes can exist at all. Yet it seems clear that they do. A soldier who kills an allied spy who is embedded within an opposing army during a battle commits a serious 'mistake', which upon learning about he may strongly regret. However, such a mistake is neither negligent nor blameworthy—even if the mistake depends upon the soldier's ignorance about certain aspects of reality. The possibility of blameless mistakes in action depends upon the agent's assessment of the *morally salient* aspects of a situation (whatever those are), which is not necessarily equivalent to all the possible descriptions or facts about a situation. Without further specification of how values relate to the other aspects of reality, it seems as though the momentum of O'Donovan's view leads to treating the soldier as culpable for the killing, even if not seriously so.

O'Donovan's concern to integrate description into the task of moral reasoning leads him then to consider the path between the good and the right, a path that 'practical reason' leads us down. On his view, neither our desires nor our duties are self-evidently or transparently correct. Moral thinking cannot ignore them, as they provide 'indications' (28) of what is to be done, but neither is it exhausted by them. Instead, moral thinking involves 'practical reasoning'. While goodness 'is an aspect of what *is*', and rightness 'is what *is to be done*', practical reasoning 'correlates the actions we immediately project with the way things are' (28).[2] That process of correlation is not unidirectional, however: it is 'not deductive, but inductive', as it 'moves to and fro between the world of realities and the moment of action' (30).

But O'Donovan's account of practical reasoning suffers from the same ambiguity about the 'way things are' mentioned above. O'Donovan seems to oscillate between what might be called a substance ontology (in which reality consists of 'things') and a 'states of affairs' ontology. As he puts it, 'The goodness of good things constitutes a reason why *certain* acts at *certain* times are right;...'. (29) It is because Bach's music has certain intrinsic qualities, it seems, that we are right to listen to it under the

[2] All italics in quotations are original.

right circumstances. Yet O'Donovan will later suggest that 'The question "what am I to do?" means, "what am I to do *in this state of affairs*?"—and so always presumes an answer to the question "what state of affairs?".' (32) This is a much broader construal, which raises questions about how 'goodness' is an aspect of what 'is' and whether O'Donovan's association of it with 'things' is sufficient. The goodness (or lack thereof) of particular 'things' or substances like Bach's music or Shakespeare's plays may be part of our description of a particular 'state of affairs', but some goods that we grasp—like friendship or knowledge—are not attached to substances at all. Such goods are not necessarily grasped as aspects of 'what is'—or 'things', on O'Donovan's account—but as opportunities that can be enacted. One pursues friendship not because it is an aspect of what exists, but because it might yet come to be.[3]

This ambiguity comes to the fore when O'Donovan considers the possibility of 'things indifferent' (*adiaphora*) in moral reasoning, which he takes up in the context of identifying the locus for moral responsibility. Recognising that the term 'practical' frequently has non-moral connotations, O'Donovan suggests that moral thinking 'adds the question of how this action may determine the successful or unsuccessful living of a life' (33). That is, moral reasoning introduces 'the acting self' as a 'focus of attention' (33). The domain of the moral has an ineliminable self-referential dimension which happens in a 'moment of heightened moral sensibility' that we may 'perceive…immediately', in the sense that 'the fact affects us before we know how to express it' (33). In such a moment, the 'whole world (from the point of view of [our] own destiny) depends upon' our conduct (33). This 'moment of heightened moral sensibility' is akin to an intuition for O'Donovan, even though he thinks intuitionist or emotivist moral theories 'draw the wrong lesson from it' (34). But not everything impinges on the acting self this way. O'Donovan suggests that there are 'things and qualities within the world which…do not of themselves present a challenge to the human self and its living of a life'; these are 'things indifferent' (33). On his view, 'redness' or 'heaviness' only have moral relevance based on the 'practical conditions' in which they come before us. However, 'Moral qualities…are always and necessarily relevant to our agency.' (33)

[3] The language of goods as 'opportunities' is taken from John Finnis. To contrast his formulation of goods with O'Donovan's is illuminating. For Finnis, basic goods are concerned not only 'with what truly is, but also and essentially with what truly *is-to-be* in a sense that is not predictive but directive, normative, articulable from the outset in the language of normativity: should, ought, is-to-be-done'. John Finnis, 'Natural Law Theory: Its Past and Its Present', *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 57 (1992), 84.

There is unquestionably no moral difference between white or blue hydrangeas *as* hydrangeas; but it is not clear how *things* can be an answer to a 'practical question', which is a question about what one should *do* within a particular state of affairs. Whether we choose to plant blue or white hydrangeas may not matter—but planting either might, if our neighbour is deathly allergic to them or we know they have a profound dislike of them. We put moral questions to possible actions: is it right to plant hydrangeas or do we have other obligations that we should be attending to instead? There may indeed be 'things indifferent', but perhaps the more pertinent question for distinguishing between practical and moral reasoning is whether there are any possible morally indifferent actions in the state of affairs under consideration.

O'Donovan's ambiguities on how 'things' and 'states of affairs' relate to each other in the domain of practical reason, and on how moral values relate to other aspects of reality, seem to allow him to shift the emphasis of the 'moral' to how it determines the self. More clarity about ontology—about how the 'world' that we describe is composed—may enable us to identify the uniqueness of 'moral reasoning' by its shape, rather than by how it impinges upon the self. I wonder whether identifying the uniqueness of the moral with the self imposes too heavy a burden on moral reasoning. As noted, O'Donovan rejects intuitionist or emotivist moral theories. In their place, he suggests that we must 'give a thoughtful account of ourselves as those who entertain and pursue [a] project' in order to properly account for a moral undertaking (34). While O'Donovan suggests that such a movement does not 'provide additional or more decisive reasons for doing something' (33), it is still a heavy burden to place on moral thinking. Books are written to answer moral questions: must we write our autobiographies as well to discern the 'heightened seriousness' of a moral action? (33).

Additionally, it seems that we encounter moral values as those which make demands on *anyone* similarly situated, in addition to demands on our own selves as 'those who entertain and pursue [a] project' (34). In undertaking these demands we do what anyone ought to do in such a situation. That moral values make a demand on us as particular agents is consequent upon the fact that they make a demand at all. But this makes one wonder whether the moment of 'heightened seriousness' that demarcates the moral is constituted by the kind of individualised self-awareness that O'Donovan indicates, or whether, instead, it is determined by the agent's perception of moral qualities *vis-à-vis* other aspects of reality. If we have encountered that which anyone in the world would be obligated to do, why must we 'give a thoughtful account of ourselves as those who entertain and pursue [a] project' in order to give a full account of the moral

undertaking before us? Why is it not enough to say that we have found the right thing to do, the thing which anyone in the world ought do if they were in our shoes?

I want to suggest that, finally, our selves and our conception of a 'successful' life are themselves opaque, and our introspective faculties may after all be too limited to hold before ourselves such depths. While O'Donovan considers desires and duties too unstable to be the grounds for moral reasoning, this perception of 'heightened seriousness' seems to be no more stable a ground upon which to rest the uniqueness of moral experience. The self may be *less* translucent than the goods that present themselves to us in particular situations. We encounter goods about particular situations as alien and independent from us. The distance between the good and our selves makes them easier to apprehend than the more familiar, intimate, and frequently confused motivations and histories that make up our biographies. Is there a more difficult task than a fully truthful autobiography? I suspect there is within O'Donovan's undertaking a subtle gap between the theorist who provides such a broader narrative of the self within the moral life and the agent situated within a definite moral horizon. If anything, our experience of moral realities seems to be less architectonic and more fragmentary than our theorising about it—but given our frailty as creatures, these limitations are as they should be.

'Moral Communication': Response to Chapter 3

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In this response I shall expound some of the notable features of chapter three of *Self, World, and Time* (*SWT*), point to an important emerging influence on O'Donovan's thought, and engage his account in two critical conversations: in the first place with Lutheran thought, and in the second with 'apocalyptic' theology. These final two exercises are intended to help draw out the theological presuppositions inherent in *SWT* as they are exhibited in this chapter.[1]

SOME NOTABLE FEATURES

First, the book's unfurling account of 'self' is deepened and contextualised in this chapter by careful acknowledgment of the self's social construction and a textured depiction of the communal basis of our personhood, following Robert Spaemann ('The "I" and the "We"', 43-48). Moral deliberation, O'Donovan argues, is fundamentally socially embedded in both origin and outcome. It does not arise *ex nihilo* or proceed in a vacuum. That it does not is partly because of the centrality of 'communication'. (Importantly, communication here signifies not just verbal intercourse but a much broader conception, encompassing the full range of human interaction.) Accordingly, O'Donovan traces the self's awakening to active and reasoned deliberation in terms of the communicative matrices and modes of moral thinking. Elucidations of 'discussion', 'advice', 'authority', and 'moral teaching' serve as focused explorations of the various ways this occurs.

One facet is particularly helpful. Although O'Donovan is sometimes portrayed as outspokenly critical of modernity's individualism, it is deeply instructive that when he proposes a positive, constructive articulation of selfhood and the subject he is able to make a nuanced affirmation. Here he makes good on the wager that careful attention to scriptural witness and tradition affords us finer-grained treatments of *both* the individual and the collective than the individualism of the Enlightenment or reac-

[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), pp. 43-65. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

tionary communitarianism. In this important regard the present chapter is especially welcome as a highly balanced guide: it gives us 'a secure sense of "I"' which 'arises precisely from its place within the "we"' (43). And intriguingly, the final comments of the chapter bring these insights to speech in an explicitly ecclesial register, where the 'liturgical constitution of the "we"' represents that 'within which each and every "I" can realize itself' (65).

Secondly, the *cantus firmus* of *SWT* is a familiar sense of the objective moral order and its importance for Christian ethics. It is of signal importance for this chapter because acceptance of this order leads to a recognition that the world is the 'covenanted sphere of communication between [God] himself and ourselves, evoking agency and practical reason amongst us' (57). The appeal to the givenness of creation that permeated *Resurrection and Moral Order* (*RMO*) is maintained here, since all forms of communication presuppose that there is some truth about the world to be communicated. (And that is why the acknowledgment that communities and their morals are the products of discourse is consciously qualified; it does not amount to sheer constructivism.)

AN INCREASINGLY PHENOMENOLOGICAL MORAL REALISM

O'Donovan's sustained reflection upon creation seems to have distilled, in *SWT*, into new densities of description. Moreover, these passages attain a heightened affective purchase, displaying remarkable skill in exploring the shape of our lived experience in the world. It may also be that the influence of *phenomenology* is partly responsible for this developing approach. O'Donovan's use of continental philosophy—especially Jean-Yves Lacoste and Spaemann—lends a different cast to the depiction of objective reality. It does so in terms of style but also in terms of content: *SWT*'s poetic presentation is inextricably accompanied by new epistemological emphases. The material gains of engaging phenomenology are displayed in these emphases: on the world's givenness; on our 'thrownness' into it and thus our position *in medias res*; and on the emergence of reality over time which directs and draws our attention.

Why is a phenomenological approach a welcome ally for O'Donovan? Not least because phenomenology is similarly interested in being realist without being merely empiricist. Nature, for both, is no flat, inert screen upon which to project ourselves or about which to talk with sheer creativity. Furthermore, can incorporating phenomenological insights aid Protestants in a particular way? On the one hand, many exhibit characteristic nervousness about appeals to nature and unencumbered reason. In this case adherence to a thoroughgoing doctrine of sin can lead us to

affirm simply the reality of our mental constructions. On the other hand, many are tempted by recent Reformed attempts to revive natural law reasoning.[2] Phenomenology is a mode of philosophical enquiry which can teach the subtle moral realism required to go beyond both extremes. And O'Donovan's increasingly phenomenological approach promises exactly that: a moral realism aware of human finitude and of reason's embeddedness in the world, concerned with the rich reality of the created order.

These observations might seem irrelevant to questions of communication, but this is far from the case. *SWT*'s depiction of moral communication is predicated on such an account and therefore itself contributes to a developing description of the epistemology involved in an account of the normativity of nature. Chapter 3, it might be said, is a phenomenology of the mediation of created reality by creatures, 'a conversation where reality takes the lead'.[3] Furthermore, in this communicative mediation, realist convictions based on *the unveiling of objective facticity over time*[4]—that is, the emergence of reality—might have additional purchase in moral reasoning when simple observation in a scientistic mode falls short. This has broader significance for the ways theological ethicists might make arguments. James Mumford, for example, has recently used this approach in a treatment of beginning of life issues.[5]

PLACING THIS ACCOUNT IN CONVERSATION WITH LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

On page 44, O'Donovan notes Hans Ulrich's use of Psalm 4 in the task of reframing Ethics 'away from the indeterminate object of study, "the good," to the possibility of a determinate disclosure of the good: *Who will show us?*' O'Donovan's citation encourages an exploration of convergence of his approach with, or its divergence from, Luther's thought, since Ulrich is a figure impressive not least for his fecund use of Luther for contemporary theological ethics, and this issue of determinacy and

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2 For a forceful critique of this turn to natural law reasoning, away from an 'apocalyptic' perspective like that described below, see Philip Ziegler, 'The Fate of Natural Law at the Turning of the Ages', *Theology Today* 67 (January 2011), 419-29.

3 As Charles Mathewes puts it in *The Republic of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), p. 161.

4 O'Donovan suggested in conversation that Lacoste in particular has contributed to this sensibility.

5 See James Mumford, *Ethics at the Beginning of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

indeterminacy—or, perhaps, particularity and universality—is central to his contribution.

Two potential gains are suggested by attending to Lutheran theology in a conversation with chapter 3: (i) the Lutheran theology of the Word/word promises specificity regarding both revelatory divine and creaturely communication; and (ii) the Lutheran theology of, variously, orders of creation, mandates, or the estates promises specificity in accounting for those particular spheres of created life opened up by communication to a creaturely discernment of their contours.

The first gain would allow us to gloss O'Donovan's account of moral realism in its concern with communication and thereby with revelation. O'Donovan shares Luther's regard for the meaning-unveiling and meaning-mediating functions of language, and for its maieutic (midwife-ing) role with regard to moral action in comportment with reality. Yet I suspect that the implicit relationship between human and divine words which is woven through chapter 3 could be made more explicit by Luther's treatment of these themes. Could O'Donovan be invited to a fuller investigation in this direction? For example, such an investigation could explore further both similarities and dissimilarities, analogies and disanologies, of speech 'from above to below' and on the horizontal plane. Or, with a sacramental logic in mind, perhaps something could be made of the paradigmatic character of the divine permission and human naming which is exemplified in the Adamic naming of the animals (Gen. 2:18-20)?[6]

Secondly, talk of estates could modulate O'Donovan's consistent claims (proposed in *RMO*) about the generic and teleological orders inherent in creation into a more anthropocentric register which could be the counterpart of his espousal of embedded (rather than sovereign, unencumbered) rationality. That is to say, estates represent a kind of phenomenology of the places where creatures can expect divine care. Thereby, estates also circumscribe the contexts of communication that generate creaturely moral action. O'Donovan's secondary distinction among the forms of communication named in chapter 3—'advice', 'authority', 'moral teaching'—shows a different instinct. In 'advice', O'Donovan argues, the disclosure of truth is particular and occasional. In a certain kind of 'authoritative communication', 'Reality is shown us, but instead of seeing it whole, entire, and in the round, we see it through *this* demonstration, *this* personality, theory, *this* command.' (54; italics added) However, in 'moral teaching' the one being instructed receives

[6] For clues that lead in this direction see Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 1-5. Luther's Works vol. 1.* Ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958).

> comprehensive, coherent instruction that does not stop at isolated observations but pulls everything together, liberating us to learn from them all and live in harmony with nature and events…authorised by the coherence of the world and its history (60).

Might the Lutheran vision conceive of the horizons of revealed reality more proximately than this—as concretely circumscribed by divine speech? The characteristic particularity of 'advice' would thereby be closest to the kind of revelation of God's care for the spheres of actual human lives we can expect; more accurate than the universalising scope of moral teaching, since the coherence of the world's history *is* the story of God's faithful acts rather than its own self-attesting constancy. If so, faithful reason's inquiry must be ordered to the former coherence: to that temporal narrative of specific divine provision.[7]

PLACING THIS ACCOUNT IN CONVERSATION WITH APOCALYPTIC THEOLOGY

1. Powers and principalities. Chapter 3 contains O'Donovan's most recent reading of the New Testament material on 'powers', 'principalities', 'thrones' and suchlike and so invites comparison with apocalyptic strands of theology. His treatment is presented in the context of a discussion of the claim (first introduced in *RMO*) that authority is the 'objective correlate of freedom'. This claim is fundamentally concerned with how divine authority can be worldly authority (57) and so related to realities of communication; moral thinking is made possible by moral communication correlative to authority. The authorities denote 'structuring forces that determine patterns of social existence, yet [are] doomed to be overwhelmed because all forms of authority must in the end be taken up into the original, but powerful for the moment in that they mediate the original to us' (59).

Karl Barth's explication of the Lord's Prayer from *The Christian Life* is taken up suggestively in chapter 2's coda and is of particular relevance here. Prayer is again the closing topic of this chapter, though Barth has been left behind. Nonetheless, since *The Christian Life* also treats the theme of *powers* under this rubric it is difficult not to mark the difference between Barth's and O'Donovan's understandings of this terrain. For Barth, *The Christian Life* concerns the 'Struggle for Human Righteousness', which involves 'Revolt against Disorder', and *so* far can he keep

[7] For a critical appraisal of O'Donovan's work along these lines see Brian Brock, 'The Form of the Matter: Heidegger, Ontology and Christian Ethics', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3 (2001), 257-79.

company with O'Donovan's understanding. But Barth's speaks strikingly of a 'revolt against the Lordless powers' and so might heighten the critical impulse in O'Donovan. As such Barth is also more reluctant to speak about their role in the communicative mediation of reality. If the powers can be deceptive about their own reality they can generate social formations of unreality. Their self-aggrandizing propaganda mediates nothing but simulacra and simulation. Alongside this O'Donovan's recognition that 'The event [of authority] itself overwhelms and refashions the institutions' (59) is valuable, but it must not side-line the apocalyptic key of the New Testament witness that Barth stresses. That Barthian viewpoint also understands that the powers are doomed, but would likely demur from the idea that this is because of an immanent *Aufhebung* into God's rule, which is what O'Donovan seems to suggest. Instead, it insists that, viewed eschatologically, they are defeated and just so set under the one true Lord.

As well as perception of falsehood—or better, discernment of spirits—East of Eden, there exists also the possibility, as Luther reminds us with an eye on Genesis 3, that the communicative event illumines reality in its genuine brokenness (and not simply brokenness as exception which proves the rule of order, *pace* O'Donovan). Our attention is rightly drawn to the thorns and thistles, and we are allowed in *that* way to take heed of the world as an objective referent in our self's journey of moral deliberation: to repent! It is not simply that communication alerts us to the fact that our actions actualise an ignorance of the creation's pristine contours. The 'firmest grasp of the real'[8] made possible in our communication's mediation of the world to one another entails more than that. The gospel's apocalyptic cast also alerts us to the fact that heightened awareness of disruptive powers that are characteristic of the old aeon's entanglement with sin, keeps company with the salutary presence of the 'new'. Could we be so bold as to venture that Augustinians, in seeking to do better than apocalypticism, clip off the lower notes and highest hopes of the gospel?

2. Christology. Finally, O'Donovan notes that moral teaching presses 'beyond' as it moves towards divine authority. Here, in Matthean mood, the singularity of Jesus' teaching become apparent (64). Nonetheless an apocalyptic understanding would ask whether the communicative disclosure of reality ought also be more *explicitly* yoked to *Christ's presence* and work of making all things new. Colossians 3, for instance, predicates much on the risen Lord's present reality. There we find the new self, as in

[8] The phrase is borrowed from John Webster, '"The Firmest Grasp of the Real": Barth on Original Sin', in John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2004), pp. 65-76.

O'Donovan's description, renewed in knowledge, just as in Romans we find the mind renewed in accordance with God's will (12:2). The new self, though, is 'being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator'—the new mind is explicitly *not* to be conformed to the pattern of this world. Is there cause to wonder here about the possibility of revelatory communication opening the gaze not just to 'new perception of reality that is needed for effective action' (53) but also to the formal *and material* primacy of new perception of the *new* reality, Christ himself and his benefits?

The time of induction in moral communication, then, in which we are brought to thought, speech, and action, is never other than the *kairos* of Christ's ongoing *self*-disclosure.[9] In O'Donovan's account, P.T. Forsyth supplies this understanding (54) (though the lack of worldly contextualisation in Forsyth's account is criticised [58]).[10] Nonetheless, could it be that if O'Donovan's approach becomes too subtle on this point it will lose its Christological specificity? The richly pneumatological character of *SWT* must not effect a Christological deflation. When 'a free moment appears brand new and spacious'[11] it is only because Christ through the Spirit is recognised and obeyed as true Lord. To be clear, O'Donovan as moral theologian is above all about the task of building a conceptual framework to secure precisely this moment. Yet it is threatened by the understatement of divine action in the creaturely emergence of communication in chapter 3 and the heavy stress upon unchanging nature as objective referent for communication. Properly understood, apocalyptic reminds us that an account of communication and objective reality in theological ethics cannot afford to take for granted the singular priority of salvific orientation to an agent who is Lord of history *as well* as Creator of all.

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9 For an articulation of Christ's agency *as* reality *contra* O'Donovan, see Christopher Holmes, *Ethics in the Presence of Christ* (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

10 The relevance of this point to discussions in chapter 5 (see e.g. p. 93) is outside the purview of this response, but highly pertinent.

11 Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 200.

'Moral Theory': Response to Chapter Four

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Chapter four of *Self, World, and Time* (*SWT*) introduces the top level of moral thinking: Ethics, which can be pursued as Christian Ethics. In this review, I search for definiteness in distinguishing Ethics and Moral Teaching, and in relating Ethics and Doctrine. I conclude with a critique of O'Donovan's understanding of Christian Ethics, suggesting that the Christian element of the task makes it more unique than O'Donovan will necessarily allow.

O'Donovan takes Ethics (capitalised) as 'the whole range of intellectual attention that is given to moral thinking and moral teaching by philosophy and theology…'. [1] It is 'a discipline of study within the realm of organized knowledge' (67). Its Christian form traditionally grew from, or was something of a piece with, Theology more broadly; the separation of the two within Protestantism appeared most distinctly during the Enlightenment, and grew from (i) slackening ecclesial discipline, and tolerance of dissent in national churches; (ii) the rise of belles-lettristic ethical discourses; and (iii) the development of Philosophical Ethics. Of course, there was an eighteenth century devotional revival, as well, and a romantic reaction to Kantian aridity.

Ethics, among sciences, does not have a discrete object to subject to empirical investigation (69), but rather relates to action. Or, we should say, human act-*ing*, rather than human action; not 'behaviour', but moral reason. Indeed, its subject is moral reason, '*trains of thought which resolve upon action*' (71), 'thinking-to-act' (97). Ethics is not distinguished by being a non-normative discipline, *pace* some attempts of contemporary academia to pursue Ethics through neuroscience or social science alone. Ethics reflects on moral debate and introspects moral reasoning (the activity we pursue in considering our actions), distinguishing good and bad reasons; but in doing so '[t]he normativity of the primary moral deliberation exports itself into the reflective analysis' (71).

Ethics seeks to improve moral thinking—it is reflection upon this reflective practice or moment (viz., moral thinking)—but it is left unclear

[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 67. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work. All italics in quotations are original.

in O'Donovan's account how Ethics is to be distinguished in this from moral teaching.2 Both eschew 'advice' and seek to allow for the freedom of the individual. It seems that Ethics is a second-order discipline, thinking about moral thinking, yet moral teaching is presented as similarly reflective on moral thinking (71); and Ethics, not simply moral teaching, 're-shapes our moral thinking up to the threshold of action' (75)—is there any sharp distinction to be made?

As it stands, there exists a discursive triangle (overlooked by those academics who propose a too-rigid 'Ethic of X', with 'X' as, for example, happiness or responsibility [73]) of moral thinking, moral teaching and Ethics. The ethical vertex aims not to give a resolution to moral inquiry, but to lend to it a reasonable structure; it 'equips' the inquirer 'to reach a resolution of his or her own' (74). Ethics as a discipline makes no appeal to authority,[3] but is inevitably bound up with the authority that attaches to moral teaching.

When this connection to authority is outright and explicit, Ethics is part of Moral Theology.[4] Amongst theoretical disciplines, the contribution of Moral Theology is its reference and direction to the reality of God. Ethics, Philosophy and Theology each relate to reality, each in its own way. Philosophy yields categories, Ethics provides impetus and opens the field to necessary questions of action, and Doctrinal Theology—what does Doctrine do?

Having placed Ethics between science on the one hand and ethical practice on the other, O'Donovan proceeds in the second part of the chapter ('Moral Theology and the Narrative of Salvation') to situate Ethics with regard to scripture and theology. We enter by considering scripture's

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2 Moral teaching is defined in Chapter three as instruction of moral agents in what is morally authoritative; it is not the giving of commands, but instruction in how to perceive what is ethically meaningful, liberating the 'disciple to understand and live well' (p. 60).

3 However, O'Donovan consistently claims that it is 'normative'. O'Donovan suggests that Ethics might be non-authoritative because Ethics as a discipline can be integrated into varying confessions (p. 74). Yet isn't it the case that ethics (small 'e', as well as capital 'E' ethical theorising) will vary precisely according to the confessions to which they are attached? It seems that the distinction might rather be that (Christian) Ethics as a university discipline refrains from presenting itself as authoritative, and works subjunctively; it offers the normative reasons that another (non-academic) actor would use were they to be in a position to speak authoritatively.

4 '[A] self-conscious positioning of Ethics within the wider convictions of Christian existence is undertaken within the discipline of Christian Ethics, or Moral Theology' (p. 75).

role, and find that it is a divine resource for and aide to moral thinking, but does not preclude thinking. As deliberation is to obedience, so thinking is to text; scripture calls us to specifically 'thoughtful obedience' (78). Further, Ethics is not itself biblical interpretation, but it assumes that an interpretation can be had, and one that explains a train of ethical thought. Obedience requires that we follow this train, accounting along the way for the historical place and complexities of our own situation and of that within the text.

Scripture's ethical importance is not only in paradigmatic or exemplary moral situations, nor in the explicit commands it contains, but also in its depiction of reality. Here we meet the issue of Doctrine's relation to Ethics, as Doctrine is sometimes presented as providing a scriptural worldview for Ethics' use. O'Donovan rejects this and presents Doctrine and Ethics as two 'systematic and ordered disciplines' (81). Certainly they are. But how to relate them, other than to insist that they be related, and to insist that they do so having first been distinguished? O'Donovan marks them as 'sister-disciplines' (81) both sharing the task of reading Scripture, which includes the synthetic task sometimes (wrongly) arrogated to Doctrine. But beyond the importance of maintaining their distinction (marked by the use of '*vis à vis*' as a noun), O'Donovan fails to establish a *parallel* relationship of the two. For example, in establishing the disciplines' respective discoveries, Peter's Pentecost sermon is doctrinal (concerned with 'God's being and works'), which leaves its hearers asking for 'a *next thing*' (82), that is, for Moral Theology. In this case, Doctrine and Moral Theology are related as *preceding* and *following*. Similarly, 'From statements about God as the ground of our action it must be possible to make the transition to how we are to live.' (86) Again, it seems that Doctrine *grounds* Ethics (even if we allow that Ethics can include the reading of Scripture without Doctrine as its mediator), for what would it mean to mark such 'statements about God' as part of Ethics rather than Doctrine?

Other than being separate disciplines, that is, modes of thinking with different ordering canons and intellectual impulses or habits, I propose we also think of Doctrine and Ethics as two moments of Christian thought, and that their relation, from the point of view of the ethics O'Donovan here elaborates, might be simply that of reflection and deliberation. Moral Theology's movement between the doctrinal and the practical (89)—might this be moral thinking's movement between reality and right act?[5]

[5] We might find an example earlier in the text: 'The proposition that God loves the world is in itself a work of reflection, a determination of the truth of things, not a decision to do something, yet we have not grasped its full significance unless our minds are led on to how we may conduct ourselves in a

In any case, woe betide she who would collapse Doctrine and Ethics. Doctrine and Ethics each have their own 'discoveries' (82). Ethics' discoveries include the necessity of human action—that there is something to be done—and the subjectivity of human action. Apart from the rarefying we might suspect of Doctrine (the potential of 'swallowing up the "what are we to do?"'), it more appropriately discovers objective realities. Doctrine and Ethics give us 'a third-person and a first-person point of view' (82). Schleiermacher's ethics is an example of the collapse. Here, Ethics is the description of the Christian community, which is necessarily spiritual, with no normative deliberation on what do; that is, simply describing the church shows us what Christians do; we don't have to figure out any hard moral problems. Schleiermacher is further problematic in that his is only a '*religious* description' (86); it leaves out any description of God's world and man's life therein.

What lies behind this reference to Schleiermacher, making this example a relevant one for O'Donovan's audience? O'Donovan's distinguishes between two possibilities open to putatively Christian Ethics. Moral Theology's 'theme', we read, 'is not…a special *kind* of moral thinking, that of Christian believers, nor a special *kind* of moral teaching, that of Christian teachers…but…moral thinking *in general* and moral teaching *in general*' (75). This judgment illustrates two separate issues to be decided by those undertaking Moral Theory.

I read in these lines, first, a caution against a communitarian temptation to pursue Ethics merely through describing the practices of the Christian community. O'Donovan denies this: Christian Ethics ought to offer structure and rationality to the moral reflection of Christian believers, but it seeks a more universal scope, speaking to more than believers only. One line of justifying Divinity's place in the university would make this affirmation; the reason O'Donovan's gives is, in part, the apologetic force of Christian Ethics' demonstration of the moral agent's relation to God. Christian Ethics includes amongst its discoveries, its data of reality on which we may reflect, that humans must act and that in some relation to God (75).

Second, addressing Moral Theology's theme broaches the issue of warrants: to which community may I as a moral theologian authoritatively speak? (Alternately, whom do I believe can speak authoritatively of Moral Theology? Or, while anyone may venture claims, even hold institutional roles, in a pluralist society, to whom will I as a Christian actually listen?) To what extent do I want to say I am a human moral agent, prac-

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world that God loves' (p. 32). O'Donovan countenanced this construal at the KLICE Research Seminar, Cambridge, July 2014.

ticing morality 'in general', apart from my existence as a Christian one? This distinction makes autobiographical, chronological sense (I came to faith at a certain historical point), but is it perfectly accurate theologically? Here O'Donovan addresses the longstanding question of the relation of nature and grace:

> Moral thinking is the vocation of Adam, an aspect of human nature. But Adam's vocation is never "pure" nature, conceivable in isolation and on its own, but is conceived only in the light of the Second Adam, who is Christ (75).

However, does this claim cohere with the later one, that faith 'is either present or absent' and that faith is an 'operation of God himself' allowing one to 'see the secret of the world and time' (106). Yes, the Christian pursuing Moral Theory is not more-than-human (that is, she is pursuing something recognisable to 'moral thinking *in general*'), but what does it mean to characterise this God-given insight as part of Adamic ethics? Does it make sense to claim that seeing the 'secret of the world and time' is part of Ethics 'in general'? Might this gift of faith make a difference not only in the content, but even in the task of Ethics?

Adopting the phenomenological stance shown in the metaphor of 'waking' in chapter one, we might also ask whether it is possible for the moral theorist to pursue his task with worldly insight, only to find the necessity of divine insight and the gracious receipt of faith from God, as is said to happen. Surely this is possible. Yet it seems worth reflecting on our preference for the language of 'conversion' in such instances, of a change from faith's absence to its presence; it seems that an examination of Christians' experience would show something that coming to faith is often (usually?) more radical than ethical reflection coming to its logical conclusion (the latter being O'Donovan's suggestion or hope [75]). Indeed, why does the phenomenological approach fall away after the first chapter, replaced by a rationalised schema of practical-to-abstract levels of moral reflection?[6] It might be that moral agents rarely if ever experience morality in such a way, that for every Bonhoeffer who is first a theologian, and then a Christian,[7] there are a million lay believers who experience Chris-

[6] This is demonstrated by the second chapter's discussion of Hume on the good and the right; introducing this theme makes sense in an Ethics textbook, less so in a phenomenological 'induction' into the ethical life of 'active believers' (p. xi).

[7] Perhaps O'Donovan's case for conversion as the logical end of Ethics (and his concurrent nature-grace opinion) would be bolstered by such examples—would phenomenology bear out this idea of Ethics having God latent within it?

tian moral understanding as something unique and discontinuous with their former way of thinking, rather than its internally summoned consummation. This may be wrong, of course; perhaps for each one of these lay believers, there is another who experiences no particular transformation of their moral thinking when 'awakened' or 'inducted'.

At root, this is another aspect of the question of apocalyptic reality brought up in Samuel Tranter's piece—how does new creation relate to the world as publicly visible? Is new creation continuous with the world that everyone, Christian and non-Christian, encounters? If we say 'yes', we logically expect the Christian difference to express itself in ethical reflection. If we do not expect Ethics inevitably to encounter God, we might say that humans and the rest of creation await a revelation from outwith; that Ethics will not ascend to God or to his antechamber, but that faith, which sees past '*first* appearances', 'is not an immanent human power but an operation of God himself' (106).

We may ask Christian Ethics to be more than simple description of Christian life or church practices, but do we ennoble Christian Moral Theory by asking it to be a universal guide to moral experience, having previously categorised it a species of human ethical thinking? Are the realities to which it refers helpful outside of evangelism,[8] or even intelligible to those not converted? Indeed, why is it that Philosophy does not return the favour (76) of adopting Moral Theological categories? Christian Ethics is not simply Ethics done very, very well, because of Christians' superior, faith-enabled insight.[9] Rather, Christians respond in their Ethics to new realities seen only in faith; for example, the celibate man doesn't just see past the '*first* appearance' of marriage; he responds to a different appearance altogether—that of the new heavens and the new earth. This latter, Philosophy cannot do, nor can Ethics anticipate this.

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[8] A task to which O'Donovan seems to commit Moral Theology, in its summoning of moral thinking and teaching to be converted to God (p. 75).

[9] O'Donovan agrees: 'Moral Theology offers to complete [Ethics], not by giving final answers to unanswered questions or concrete directions in place of general principles, but by pointing beyond formalities of thought and language to realities that determine what answers are worth reaching.' (76) Although 'pointing beyond formalities…to realities' seems similar to offering 'concrete directions in place of general principles' (though there may be a distinction between 'directions' and 'answers'), the basic point remains. However, are the realities that Moral Theology indicates 'already implicit in moral thought' (75)?

'The Task of Moral Theology': Response to Chapter Five

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In 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul warns that some of the work we venture in the *saeculum*, or in the 'age of Ethics', as *Self, World, and Time* (*SWT*) calls it,[1] may not outlast this era. We are like workmen, our faltering steps, stuttering speech, and earnest gestures our building materials. Some of our works will survive the refiner's fire, but some will not. In Dante's image, some works will be forgotten in the amnesial waters of Lethe, and some will be recalled in the mnemonic waters of Eunoe. The moral agent's practical reason, fully aware that even its most confident decisions may be found wanting, attempts to discern the difference. To fail to act, from the paralysing fear that some works may end up like burnt straw, is, to jump parables, like burying the talent in the ground. So *SWT* rightly counsels that we must 'use this moment of time to do something, however modest, that is worthwhile and responsible, something to endure'—*we hope*—'before the throne of judgment' (17). This counsel stands behind the explorations of faith, love, and hope in chapter five.

O'Donovan introduces the triad of faith, love, and hope as an example—in Thomistic parlance—of grace perfecting nature (102), the natural children of human moral experience christened by the eschatological Spirit with new names at their baptism: the awareness of self, now renamed 'faith'; awareness of world, now 'love'; and awareness of time, now 'hope'. In the following, I will focus in particular on the last pair, time and hope. I do so not only because hope plays a leading role, arriving after faith has taken the stage and prepared the scene, but also because, by playing a supporting role to love, at least ethically, hope's character is also the least developed.

MORAL THEOLOGY, FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

Despite pietistic or neo-Orthodox attempts to collapse Ethics into faith or conversion (93), few would argue against recognising the leading

[1] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 91. Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

roles faith, love, and hope should play in Christian moral reasoning, and O'Donovan invokes Augustine, Aquinas, Tyndale, and the early Barth to prove as much. However, unique to O'Donovan is the attempt to correlate these theological virtues with the triad that structures natural moral reasoning, namely, self, world, and time. Though love as the form of a renewed awareness of the world, and hope as the form of a renewed awareness of time may be more immediately convincing, O'Donovan also argues persuasively that faith is the proper description of a self's awareness of Christ's resurrection, the 'absolute center of history' (92)—a linear version of T.S. Eliot's reference to the 'still point of a turning world'.[2]

Whereas *Resurrection and Moral Order* attends primarily, though not exclusively, to elucidating and loving the created moral order 'behind us', so to speak,[3] *SWT* attends primarily, though not exclusively, to the pneumatic renewal of creaturely agency, and its hopeful movement into the undetermined penultimate future 'ahead of us'. Thus faith frees the moral agent's practical reason to move from the empty tomb in either of two directions, toward the beautifully ordered world or toward 'a new moment of participation in God's work and being' in time (92-3). Thus the natural moral awareness of self, world, and time become the Christian performances of faith, love, and hope.

Here we move from the faithful self that loves the world to reflect on the hope-filled 'new moment', which tutors us, O'Donovan writes, 'to look for new activity, new deeds', and 'new possibilities that *prepare the way for* new heaven and a new earth' (93, italics added). This idea echoes 2 Corinthians 5 and Romans 8, where Paul explains that the same Spirit who will one day redeem all creation has already begun to redeem one part of creation in the meantime, namely, the hearts and minds of Christians in order that, together with Christ, they may be the first fruits, or advance realisation, of the new creation. Christian moral agents are oriented toward the eschatological end, and called to act improvisationally in harmony with what has come and will come, and so to *be*come, in N.T. Wright's description, not only 'a sign and foretaste of what God wants to do for the entire cosmos', but also '*agents* of the transformation of this earth'.[4]

SWT's assertion that our deeds 'prepare the way' for the new heaven and earth invites further scrutiny, but not because it evokes a worry

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2 See his poem, 'Burnt Norton' in *The Four Quartets*: 'At the still point of the turning world …. Except for the point, the still point, There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.'

3 Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

4 Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007), pp. 213–4.

about O'Donovan 'immanentizing the eschaton' (to adapt Eric Voegelin's phrase) like some zealous postmillennialist or nineteenth-century progressivist. On the one hand, 'prepare the way' echoes the confident vocation of the Baptizer calling out in the wilderness, but on the other, *SWT* leaves rather obscure what counts as such a potent preparatory action, and how we recognise it as such. What kinds of deeds would a train of hope-directed practical reasoning arrive at that might proleptically participate in or 'prepare the way for' the new creation? My questions are, first, whether hope does moral work, or pulls its moral weight in the book alongside love; and, second, whether *SWT*'s reservation about specifying our eschatological knowledge unnecessarily inhibits it from offering sufficient direction to our moral reasoning.

Chapter five recognises the question. It asks, 'how are we to speak of an *eschatological elevation* without being left gesturing, contentless, pointing towards indefinable and indescribable empty space?' (95; italics added). Considered, but rejected, points of eschatological disclosure include fraternal poverty and monasticism, revolution, Schleitheim ecclesiology and martyrdom, because these, we are told, 'do not provide direction for the life we are called to live in obedience to what God has said and done for us'; that is, they cannot be converted into recommendation, counsel, or reproof (95). It is, however, not entirely clear why these historical moments could not serve at least as models, or why there might not be a train of thinking stimulated by them that could tutor our practical moral reasoning in hope, so that we are not left gesturing impotently toward an unknown good beyond our imagining.

FORWARD IN HOPE

O'Donovan promises that as our gaze follows the Risen One forward, our 'forms of moral thinking' are 'given back to us incomparably more disciplined, more informed, more comprehensive, more inviting, than they could have been before' (95-6). However, when we begin to look for content that could tutor our eschatological practical reason toward the future, both this chapter and the next leave us wanting. Whereas Christian existence is built on faith and embodied in love, *SWT*'s account of hope lacks the strong cognitive content O'Donovan identifies in love (113-14), and seems to offer not guidance for life during the 'age of Ethics', but encouragement to endure it (99) and 'a space of freedom' in which whatever we do may be done. We read that whereas faith certifies the conscience and love leads to compassionate neighbourliness, hope comforts and consoles in adversity (100). Absent is the possibility that eschatological hope might direct us to the aforementioned new opportunities, new

deeds, and new possibilities. Instead, hope represents 'the severest purgation of our knowledge' (123). Chapter six will state that hope 'opens the way to agency', but not, we note, through the lesser mode of 'anticipation' (which grounds future action on the basis of present realities), because that for which we hope remains shrouded in the unknown and unseen future. It is not clear, however, how an unknown end can animate or open the way to agency, or why the anticipated redemption of the good creation is not a sufficient grounding for hope, or why hope is necessarily tethered to an unknowable 'eschatological elevation'.

The most promising role assigned to hope is the unexpected statement that hope can discern opportune times to resist adversity and to serve God and the neighbour (100). This still seems under-described and hard to reconcile with the unknowable content of hope. I want to propose that hope, informed by what we can know of the eschatological kingdom and new heavens and earth, might alert us to those anti-creation forces and structures that should be resisted in order to 'prepare the way for' and to offer anticipatory and proleptic witness to the new heaven and a new earth. Bonhoeffer gestures in this direction in *Creation and Fall*: 'The church of Christ witnesses to the end of all things. It lives from the end, it thinks from the end, it acts from the end, it proclaims its message from the end.… The church speaks within the old world about the new world.'[5] Likewise, Barth reminds us, 'Seen in the New Testament context, the future, the world to come…has already encountered those who call upon God in it here in the present, in this world.… They have to do with the future in the present, the world to come in this world, the last thing in the first.'[6]

Here, let me offer five examples of movement from eschatology to hopeful discernment that bend activities back and return them to us, in *SWT*'s words about moral thinking, 'incomparably more disciplined, more informed, more comprehensive, more inviting, than they could have been before' (96). We 'wake' to their intelligibility and their dignity as actions that will ultimately be received and remembered because they help us in small and penultimate ways resist the chaos and disorder of the world and nurture wholeness and human flourishing. They possess

[5] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*. Tr. Douglas Stephen Bax; ed. John W. De Gruchy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 21.

[6] Karl Barth, *The Christian Life. Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments.* Tr. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 247.

a kind of proleptic sacramentality that, to borrow a phrase from the poet Scott Cairns, enables them to 'lean into' the divine future.[7]

I recognise that what follows diverges from *SWT* because these are examples of 'anticipation', which the book distinguishes from hope's apophatic eschatological elevation, but these better demonstrate how the work of temporal agency could be informed by the eschatological new creation. Dante's *Commedia* operates like this, sending trajectories 'back', so to speak, to the world of the not-yet-dead in order to provoke readers to work for the intellectual and social harmony of *Paradiso*, to practice the reforming virtues of *Purgatorio*, and to avoid the fractious perversions of *Inferno*. We are not given the fullness of Dante's *Commedia* in scripture, but we might be given enough to approximate his method. The following examples not only orient the moral imagination and the moral agent teleologically; they also offer practical reason a critical question: would this action, thought, sentiment, or practice be welcomed into the new creation or resisted by it?—is it gold or hay?

Consider, first, Paul's conclusion in 1 Corinthians 6 that because Christians will eschatologically judge angels and the world, they should avoid taking each other to court because, in Gordon Fee's words, Christians

> are eschatological people, who will themselves be involved in God's final judgments on the world. ….The future realities, which for Paul are as certain as the present itself, condition everything the church is and does in the present.[8]

Consider, second, health care and the resurrection of the dead. The background texts include the *sōmata epourania* (heavenly bodies) of 1 Corinthians 15:40, the resurrection of the body in the Apostle's Creed, the absence of death, crying, or pain in Revelation 21:4, the tree and the water of life in Revelation 22:1–3, and Jesus' healing of broken human bodies ahead of their final restoration. From these slight pictures of flourishing eschatological life we might move to the practices of restorative healthcare or hospice ministries during life in the world. Caring for the physical well-being of others, restoring the healthy functioning of their bodies, or

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7 In his prose and poetry Cairns refers to leaning into God, prayer, 'the Holy Presence,' 'the apophatic,' 'the mystery,' and 'the eternal divine life'. See, for instance, *Short Trip to the Edge* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), pp. 89–90; *The End of Suffering: Finding Purpose in Pain* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009), pp. 8, 73.

8 Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 232–3.

accompanying them towards death might thus be described as practices that resist the disorder and deleterious effects of the fall and anticipate the life and health of the world to come. Furthermore, recognising the patient to be an eternal being may be a disincentive to neglect or harm him, but instead, with compassion and reverence, to provide him the fullest care that time and resources allow.[9]

A further tether may be tied between the absence of grief and distress in the eschatological kingdom, every tear having been wiped away by God, and the work of mental health professionals, whose work both responds to the ways the broken creation injures people, but also anticipates, as a foretaste, the coming eschatological relief and joy. Fourth, Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that art and beauty enable humans now to experience a foretaste of the 'refreshing delight' that will be afforded them in the eschatological *shalom* of the coming Kingdom.[10] As Etienne Gilson asserts, 'Thanks to the fine arts, matter enters by anticipation into something like the state of glory promised to it by theologians at the end of time'[11]—the material glory glimpsed in Revelation's beautiful new Jerusalem. Finally, consider how the absence of marriage in heaven, but not intimate community, gave birth to the Christian reconception of family and the practices of celibacy, adoption, and godparenthood. We could continue with the ways eschatological hope might deepen our understanding and practice of friendship, peace-making, theological investigation, patriotism, hospitality, justice, and so forth.

Though hope *is* 'hidden in the heavens', it might be that the Spirit who moves between the new and the old creation, and who causes us faithfully to hope for the one and love the other, also rouses us to discern and pursue, in the immediacy of our spatial and temporal existence, some of the 'dearest, freshness, deep down things' that we will meet with glad recognition and full wakefulness when that eschatological morning, 'at the brown brink eastward, springs'.[12]

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9 See C. S. Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory', in *Transposition and Other Addresses* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), pp. 32–33.

10 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 78-84.

11 Etienne Gilson, *Arts of the Beautiful* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2009), p. 33.

12 From Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur'.

'The Trajectory of Faith, Love, and Hope': Response to Chapter 6

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At its core, Oliver O'Donovan's *Self, World, and Time* (*SWT*) is a reflection on God's life as faith, love, and hope intended to illuminate the shape and direction of our life together.[1] O'Donovan provides us with an occasion to see how moral and doctrinal claims interlock, for theology cannot properly be theology if it does not attend to doctrine's inclination to stretch its legs into the actual life of the Christian believer. As a historian of Christian thought and practice, my response will resist a certain inclination to press immediately towards action and will delay for the moment the question 'what's at stake?' In this response, I will, instead, attend to the theological architecture of the book from the angle of the triad of faith, love, and hope that offers a doctrinal structure to O'Donovan's argument and, as we shall see, undergirds the coordination of 'self', 'world', and 'time'.

In chapter six, O'Donovan examines the character of the *relation* between faith, love, and hope. How are they held together as a unity? In the first line of chapter six, O'Donovan cuts off an obvious strategy of finding the unity in just one of the theological virtues (e.g., love as a kind of 'essence' of the triad itself). Instead of this 'essentialist' rendition, O'Donovan prefers a model based on a 'dynamic interplay' between faith, love, and hope. In the words of Tyndale, a fitting mouthpiece for this symposium, 'Because the one is known by the other, it is impossible to know any of them truly, and not be deceived, but *in respect and comparison* of the other.'[2] Elsewhere, O'Donovan has suggested that the relationship is 'a kind of *communicatio idiomatum*'.[3] This seems to reiterate what he left us with at the end of chapter five of *SWT*:

[1] I am in debt to Rachel Teubner, Joseph Lenow, Matthew Puffer, and Charles Mathewes for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

[2] Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time. Ethics as Theology 1: An Induction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 105 (my emphasis). Subsequent page references in the text are to this work.

[3] 'Faith before Hope and Love', *New Blackfriars* 95.1056 (March 2014), pp. 177-89, quote on p. 181.

> Their unity can be expressed by saying that the gift of the *self*, perfected in faith, provides a point of view from which we may understand the *world* as affording us *time* to *act*; the gift of the *world*, perfected in love, provides a point of view from which we may understand the *self* as laying claim to *its own time*; the gift of *time*, perfected in hope, provides us a point of view from which we may understand the *self* as active *within the world* (103).

As presupposed in this passage, faith, love, and hope map onto self, world, and time respectively. The theological triad should, then, be held together in a manner analogous to that of self, world, and time. Further, we might also expect the epistemic access to be reciprocal as well: to capture the relationship between faith, love, and hope is thus to understand the relation between self, world, and time; and to capture the relationship between self, world, and time is to understand the relation between faith, love, and hope.

While I have some concerns about this way of relating the two triads, which I will return to below, I would like to focus first on the relations within the triads by drawing upon the last section in chapter two ('Ethics and Prayer'). In the tradition of two of his most prized interlocutors, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas,[4] O'Donovan expounds the Lord's Prayer as a *moral* document, drawing out the references to self, world, and time. The petition, 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven', indicates the *world* as the 'scene of God's self-disclosure'; 'Give us this day our daily bread' designates those claims for the care of the *self*; and the petition, 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil' calls to a future *time* (39). In saying the Prayer, we as a community are drawn through the very logic of world, self, and time.

Notice, however, that O'Donovan's ordering has changed. The Lord's Prayer unfolds as world-self-time. Mapping this onto the theological triad, we would have the order love-faith-hope. O'Donovan has argued that the classic order, faith-hope-love, is not the only order attested in Scripture, plumping instead for the order reflected in the title of the book, faith-love-hope (self-world-time).[5] He exerts considerable energy in Chapter 5 establishing this seemingly minor point because it relates to the structure of Christian action.[6] The disparate orderings suggest that

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4 Augustine, *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, trans. John J. Jepson, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 5 (New York: Paulist Press, 1948), pp. 100-27. Thomas Aquinas, *The Catechetical Instructions*, trans. Joseph B. Collins (New York: Veritas Splendor Publications, 1939), pp. 247-307.

5 *SWT*, pp. 97-103.

6 'We conclude this induction into Ethics as Theology, then, with a journey through the trajectory of this sequence, tracing how the active self expands

O'Donovan is not entirely sure-footed with respect to whether the self or the world, whether faith or love, is the first step for human action. We return to this below.

Crucially, the prayer concludes with a movement toward personal action ('lead us not'). Whereas the preceding petitions evoke action outside of us—your *kingdom* come, your *will* be done, give us this *day*, forgive our *debts*—the final petition draws those who give it voice—the 'we' or 'us' of the prayer—into the action of God. While the prayer begins with the vocative 'Father!'—the cry of dependence that we utter as we are 'pressing forward upon the knees'—it concludes with the promise of a complicated agency—God's *and* our's—that is, upon reflection, already present within the action of genuflection. Indeed, 'Prayer is the form thought takes when we understand that agency implies a relation to the government of the universe, at once cooperative and dependent.' (38-9)

But what kind of unity does the Lord's Prayer have? Two possible loci of this unity come to mind. The first has already been intimated (and is further clarified in chapter three): the community, the 'we' that is found in the prayer (64). The prayer's unity is in the community, the congregation that gives it voice. In a similar vein to how Augustine reads and preaches the Psalms, speaking the prayer in unison effects a kind of unity of the praying community.7 The second is derived from the form of the prayer: action or the possibility of agency that proceeds out of the prayer and draws all of its words behind it as a single unifying impulse of the Christian life. As the tip of a spear collects all of the force at one critical point, so too does the concluding petition draw together into action all the other petitions. It appears that O'Donovan is more engaged here with what is at stake in the second, that is, the possibility of agency. Action as the point of unity is emphasized in his discussion of the three 'offices' of faith, love, and hope (100). The unity of faith, love, and hope seems, then, to be of action. The centrality of action comes as no surprise, but how exactly does this square with the 'dynamic interplay' that replaces an essentialist account? For this we must return to chapter six.

For O'Donovan, faith and love are openness, receptivity (112, 119). But they are also related to knowledge. Faith is, on the one hand, a kind of 'knowledge-minus', as O'Donovan puts it, 'a cognitive orientation towards realities that are still uncertain and unclear' (110). This could, perhaps, have been termed 'trust', an epistemic virtue whose value we

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into loving knowledge, is narrowed down to action, and finally attains rest in its accomplishment' (*SWT*, 103).

7 For an influential account along these lines, see Rowan Williams, 'Augustine and the Psalms', *Interpretation* 58 (2004), 17-27.

have recently been reminded of by current trends in epistemology.[8] Love's knowledge, on the other hand, is captured, for O'Donovan, by the term 'admiration': 'the knowledge of what can only be known in love, and the love of what can only be loved in knowledge' (113). This seems to be a kind of 'knowledge-plus'. Between 'knowledge-minus' and 'knowledge-plus' somehow emerges the promise on which hope is grounded. In O'Donovan's words, 'promise allows hope to be born, and through hope opens the way to agency' (122-3).

So what we have here is, I think, yet another triad in trust, admiration, and promise, but one that is a bit closer than the other triads to the stuff of action. But when set within this new triad, I am less convinced by the claim that hope (via its connection with promise) brings agency to effect (122). Whereas O'Donovan finds openness necessary for action in faith and love, it is trust and promise that seem to provide the conditions for *admiration* to draw me forward, pull me to the beautiful, the good, the true. Promises do not propel or effect, they guarantee; they are the substance of a trusting relation, what one party passes to another. But yet when I turn back to the Lord's Prayer, particularly the final petition—'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'—I can see the possibility of agency's ground in hope. This petition has been handed down to us as a petition of hope, and that description is acceptable, but it also points toward action. Thus, I think O'Donovan is right when he says, 'The moment of action is the moment of temptation, when our settled perceptions of the world and ourselves may fail us.' (123) To speak of temptation is to speak of possible courses of action. But is it 'only hope', as he suggests, that 'suffices to address [temptation]' (123)? If the unity of faith, love, and hope are somehow bound up with the 'logic' or form of the Lord's Prayer, we can, perhaps, catch a glimpse of the unity of the triad. But it is ambiguous whether the salutary response is in hope in particular or in the relation between faith, love, and hope. In other words, does hope as the goal—that is, the substance of that for which we hope—simply provide the orientation and thus that which collects faith and love into a unity? Or does hope play a more robust role in the animation of the movement toward action, working in tandem with faith and

[8] See, e.g., John Greco, 'Testimonial Knowledge and the Flow of Information', in *Epistemic Evaluation*, ed. by John Greco and David Henderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Linda Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy of Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Paul Faulkner, *Knowledge on Trust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

love? A clear answer to this is not offered in *SWT*, so we may have to wait until O'Donovan spells this out more clearly in the forthcoming volumes.

In the meantime, one might want to pose two specific questions. First, I am perplexed by O'Donovan's rejection of essentialism. If action is the unity that draws together the three theological virtues, and it is (nearly) identified with hope, how is this not in effect essentialising hope? Perhaps we should not, after all, give up on the essentialist strategy, provided that it is not one of the theological virtues that becomes the essence (and thereby the true substance) of the others. Rather, could not *desire* provide this golden thread? Desire is not exactly love, but a certain species of love, and neither is it faith nor is it hope, but that without which both faith and love would not even be able to begin the process of discovering a self and a world that are 'co-present' in time. This does not undercut O'Donovan's insight regarding the importance of hope to deliberation, for deliberation must still unfold in time with the promise and expectation of completed action. Rather, it gives us a hook into that which intrinsically motivates humans to look at themselves as persons living in this world. While hope might provide the structure for temporally-extended existence, it does not provide the motivation for action.

Second, O'Donovan suggests that faith, love, and hope also map onto the classical virtues: 'courage with faith, judgment with love, prudence and temperance with hope' (102). Is he thereby implicitly offering us an account of the unity of the virtues that differs both from the classical ('pagan') philosophical varieties *and* Augustine's and Luther's 'essentialist' strategies, which argue for the centrality of one of the theological virtues to the triad as a whole? O'Donovan's cryptic account leaves unclear what he makes of the classical virtues. In light of his insistence on foregrounding action—action that necessarily takes place in the world, in space and in time that Christians share with non-Christians—O'Donovan would strengthen his proposal if he were to indicate with greater care and precision, and in relation to other proposals throughout the history of Christian thought, how his account might reconfigure the classical virtues. Are non-Christians implicitly relying on the structural unity of the theological virtues when they successfully bring about a life lived according to the classical virtues? Or are the theological virtues necessary to live according to the classical virtues? A great deal has been written about this in recent years by those familiar to O'Donovan, and one wonders what he makes of these other proposals in light of his own innovations in this short volume.[9] I suspect that O'Donovan wants to reserve a place for the

[9] See, e.g., Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Eric Gregory, *Politics of the*

theological that is more than simply one way of talking about the unity of virtues shared with non-Christians. *SWT* is, of course, an incomplete book, as it points to the later promised volumes; my queries are thus tentative. To these questions, I shall be grateful to find answers in O'Donovan's forthcoming volumes.

Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Nature, Time and Moral Thought: A Response

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With few words to dispose of, I must make my thanks for these essays on *Self, World, and Time*, and for Ben Paulus' sensitive summary, more abruptly than they deserve. Dialogue is the heartbeat of thought, and my respondents have done me the inestimable service of keeping my thought circulating.

A cluster of questions arise around the nature-grace issue, which makes a good starting-point since I have been told since *Resurrection and Moral Order*[1] that I lay too much stress on their continuity. When **James King** asserts that 'new realities seen only in faith' are the ground of a Christian moral response to God, I have no difficulty in agreeing. But the 'new' arises within the economy of redemption, and One God is both Creator and Redeemer. We wonder at the new thing he has done, but we come to recognise it as the work of the Ancient of Days. *Creation* is redeemed in Christ, and for this reason *created* moral reason is the theme of Theological Ethics—yet restored and redeemed—never 'apart from evangelism'!

That the world is created, indeed, is itself a 'new reality seen only in faith'. What I find lacking in the Lutheran accounts of creation **Samuel Tranter** commends to me (though I have been glad to learn many other things from those who present them) is the discovery that 'the world', the whole of the ambiguous horizon of nature, inviting exploration with its apparently independent rationality, is in fact owned and ruled by the one who raised Jesus from the dead. Too narrowly anthropological a creation, too institutional a mankind—where is the overture to discovery, to practical experience and natural science? In *The Ways of Judgment* I complained of the doctrine of the estates that in 'ranging the church among a number of elementary social forms' it undermined ecclesiology.[2] I might equally well have seen it as operating the other way round, dragging aspects of creation into ecclesiology. **ST** himself glides seamlessly from 'mandates of creation' to 'estates' to a 'sacramental logic'. Where does that 'sacramental logic' leave the sacraments of the Gospel?

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1 Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: Outline of an Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

2 Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), p.254.

And where does it connect with **ST**'s anxieties about the 'lordless powers'? Yes there are lordless powers, but in the wake of Christ's triumph powers are not merely lordless. I go back to what I wrote in *Desire of the Nations* about 'reauthorisation'.[3] At the heart of New Testament apocalyptic there are authorities belonging to the time of human patience, *ho katechôn* for example. And what of the church itself, with its authority in preaching, counsel and denunciation? Barth's *CD* IV/4, which has inspired **ST**, can well be read alongside the equivalent section of *Ethics*, where provisional mediations of Christ's lordship receive full treatment. If we must revolt against lordless powers, we need to know where they lurk—an important question when the very language of protest has been co-opted by political power (as in Paris recently the crowds poured onto the streets when summoned by their government to do so). But this requires a 'thick' political description, with full and differentiated accounts of authority.

Both **Brian Williams** and **Jonathan Teubner** have given careful consideration to my treatment of the future. They had not very much to go on in *SWT*, and I trust they may find *Finding and Seeking* more helpful.[4] The important thing is that hope grasps promise. But to treat God's promise *as* promise is to wait upon God. Hope and anticipation (as I use the words, but the words are not the essential thing) are different: hope draws fulfilment back to the present from the promised future, anticipation projects a possible future from the present. Projecting the future is by far the most natural way to think about it; hope in the promise, then, demands an imaginative ascesis, which they both fear is something of a starvation diet.

BW offers five examples of how a more nourished eschatological imagination could supply a moral argument to a concrete conclusion. His examples interest me for the contrasting logics at work within them. The case for not litigating says, 'since it will be then, it should not be now'; the case for health care says, 'since it will be then, it should be so now'. In each case non-eschatological underpinnings—Jesus's words about judgment, his practice of healing the sick—play a larger part than might appear. Which is not meant to instil scepticism. But the beginning and end of eschatological imagery is the promise of God's decisive action, a promise which must be filled out in terms of God's *actual* self-disclosure in Christ (as, in the imagery of the Apocalypse, the slain and conquering Lamb takes centre-stage).

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3 Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

4 Oliver O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

It is right that the larger part of the discussion turns on the primary aim of the volume, which was a general description of moral experience and thought. And here a preliminary word is required about the new philosophical influences **ST** detects in *SWT*. We use our later intellectual influences very differently from the early ones that shaped us as students. Preparing for the voyage, we stuff whatever we can get into the hold, but what we encounter on the high seas we plunder selectively as we feel the need. Spaemann's account of the person gave me a great deal I needed to know about reflection (though I had settled on a use of the term long before), while to Jean-Yves Lacoste I owe a way of thinking about time, and especially the future, as a horizon of existence. Lacoste, who commended *SWT* as a *non-philosophical* ethics, once suggested to me that phenomenology was close to Augustinianism. But like Mark Twain's death, my phenomenological turn may be greatly exaggerated. I have no need to thank phenomenology for the concept of 'waking', I believe; the Bible has more than enough to say about it.

A good point of entry is **JK**'s uncertainty about the scholastic distinctions I make among the practices of moral thought: moral reason, moral teaching, and Ethics. Let us be clear about the status of these: they are tradition, and, indeed, modern tradition, unknown to the Christian world before Abelard wrote his *Ethica*. A different middle-ages in which the university never institutionalised the fragmentation of knowledge could possibly have left theology in possession of a unitary *sacra doctrina*. But we are where we are now, picking up pieces. To conceive Christian wisdom as a unity is a proper ambition for each of us, since we must be more than a specialised discipline on legs. But our scientific context is fragmented, and that affects congregations and pastors as well as faculties and professors. One reason for re-emphasising moral teaching is that we see all around us what transpires when we forget it, and the pastors leave Christian morality to be negotiated somehow between the faithful and the professors.

JT suggests that a unifying role in moral thought should be played by desire, on which, again, I say more in *Finding and Seeking*. My reservation about this is precisely parallel to my critique of anticipation. Desire I take to be a form of love, formed negatively in relation to unrealised possibility, but still formed by projection from present experience. As I read it, **Matthew Anderson**'s puzzle about the *reality* I insist on as a condition of moral thinking is not far removed from this. He wonders what happens to values and possibilities. Do I not pursue friendship, he wonders, simply because it *might yet come to be*, or, **JT** might say, because I desire it? Could I desire or pursue friendship, I wonder in return, if I had never seen it? But *if* I could, it would be by analogy from what I *had* seen. Possibility is

the excess of a thing's perfected form over its actual appearance. Thinking about possibilities can be 'realistic', since 'reality' is more than what is actually the case. I can see a bulb and look forward (realistically) to a spring flower. Yet the actual is the only *basis* for projecting possibility. **MA**'s anxiety that possibility is hostage to actual experience is reinforced by my insistence on awareness of the self. 'Must we write our autobiographies' he asks, 'to discern the heightened seriousness of a moral action?' We need not, for autobiography objectifies experience of the self in world and time, while responsible agency rests on an immediate and atemporal self-awareness. The amnesiac patient, who has lost the capacity for autobiography, may have a perfectly vital sense of self-responsibility, well aware of the peril of her situation, conscious of an urgent need to act.

Which brings me to **Kevin Hargarden**'s worries about analogies. The Pope recently described his Vatican officials as suffering from 'spiritual Alzheimers'.[5] My analogies were fairly mild by comparison, with depression, gender dysphoria and, just now, amnesia. But how can pathological conditions of this sort be mentioned in one breath with moral failures? **KH**'s anxiety over this point exactly shadows **MA**'s anxiety about nonculpable mistakes.

It is possible to think that the first responsibility of a description of moral experience is to distinguish voluntary from involuntary. It was the first ambition of voluntarist theorists from Abelard to Hume, and subsequently the casuists of modern Catholic and Reformed divinity. In rejecting it I quarrel with its assumptions about moral reason. I take moral reason to be prospective, thinking-towards-acting; retrospective applications to judgment are secondary. Before we make a judgment of any behaviour, we must consider causal explanations that would remove it from the sphere of praise and blame—actual ignorance, physically caused emotional and cognitive disorder, etc. etc. Such explanations must be dealt with on the threshold. But in thinking forward to my own next action, the question of my fitness to receive praise or blame does not arise. What matters is what a successful action will look like: what I need to know about the situation, what control I need to exercise, what technical calculations I need to make, etc. Avoiding failure and occasions for failure is my task as an agent, and in thinking what failure looks like I may draw instruction from analogies with radical failures caused by disruptions of agency. I suppose the Pope hoped it might concentrate the minds of Vatican officials (who can help themselves) to see how their conduct resembled that of Alzheimer patients (who cannot).

[5] 22 December 2014; report at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30577368>.

KH's point that whatever we say or think about pathological conditions should be informed by expert observation and first-hand testimony is well taken. But if he thinks that since a discourse about these conditions concerns suffering and not action, and so must be purely descriptive, detached from a discourse of practical reason, my own supposition, on the contrary, is that the two discourses inform one another. The patient who *thinks* as an agent is not only a sufferer. Imagine an Alzheimer patient at a moderate stage visited by an old and valued friend whom he fails to recognise. When his visitor helps him out—'Bill, I'm Lizzie! I have come from London, to see how you are'—he replies, 'Oh, Lizzie! From London! I'm so sorry! It is so stupid of me to forget!' Now Lizzie must make a decision: she can remember all she has read about the condition, and insist, 'But there's nothing to be sorry about! You can't help forgetting, it's just a condition of your brain!' Or she can accept the apology at its face value, and proceed, as she would with another person, to pardon it by making light of it: 'Never mind! You remembered as soon as I reminded you!' I am no expert on caring for Alzheimer patients, but I would think the latter response more helpful, precisely because it does not refuse the apology, but keeps Bill within the person-to-person framework of mutually responsible agents, so helping him to go on functioning even at a reduced level. Lizzie may perfectly well believe a medical report which describes Bill as quite incapable of remembering anyone. But since that account is irrelevant to how *he* is to deal with *her*, it must be suspended in *her* dealings with *him*, as well. Bill's attempt to occupy the place of moral responsibility is appropriate to the person he is still capable of being; to insist that he stop apologising would be, as we say, to 'put him in a box', and make him less than he is. And no testimony of suffering that he might offer would be complete if it did not include the constant frustration of knowing that he can envisage tasks as an agent, but not perform them.

Reviews

The Great Ejectment of 1662: Its Antecedents, Aftermath and Ecumenical Significance. By Alan P.F. Sell. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012. ISBN: 9781610973885. 296pp. £22.

The removal of approximately 2,000 ministers from the ranks of the clergy of the Church of England in August, 1662 was an upheaval of such moment that it has passed into the ongoing 'lore' of Protestantism to nearly the same degree as another event which took place on the same Sunday (St. Bartholomew's Day) of the year 1572: the massacre at Paris of upwards of 5,000 Huguenots. At half-century intervals since 1862, the ongoing significance of that English Ejectment (or, Ejection) has been freshly examined. Thus the present symposium, so ably edited by Alan P.F. Sell, the current 'doyen' of studies in English Nonconformity, marks a new half-century's reflection. It supplements and extends the reflection provided in the 1962 volume, From *Uniformity to Unity: 1662-1962* edited by Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick.

Three substantial chapters focus on the historical antecedents ('Puritanism c. 1559-1662' by John Gwynfor Jones) and national repercussions ('England 1662-89' by David J. Appleby and 'Wales 1662-89' by Eryn M. White) of the upheaval of 1662. John Gwynfor Jones provides an excellent survey of Puritan life and activity in both Elizabethan and Stuart England. The reader comes away with the sense that the Ejectment had been anticipated earlier by many 'tremors' and smaller-scale withdrawals from the national Church. Nonconformity was therefore not a novel conception in England; it was the sheer scale of the Ejectment which set it apart. David J. Appleby and Eryn M. White show the complexity of the situation faced by those who withdrew; they could not properly discern who, in fact, was their great 'nemesis'. Was it the monarch, the episcopate, or the Cavalier-dominated House of Commons? We read on the one hand of the circulation, within England, of up to 30,000 copies of the collected sermons preached by nonconforming ministers on that fateful 1662 Sunday. On the other, we learn that Wales which to that point had largely lacked a print-culture, steadily began to acquire one as nonconforming ministers laboured to put into print, in Welsh, sound instructional materials and the Bible itself for the benefit of congregations that they could now serve only furtively and outside the walls of parish churches.

The reader benefits by understanding something of the complexity of the choices faced by those who ultimately refused to conform. It was not simply a matter of pledging to use the *Book of Common Prayer* unswerv-

ingly (a sizeable obstacle for very many); there was also a requirement of re-ordination for all who were not episcopally ordained (an insistence judged inherently sectarian). Ministers were also required to abjure the 'Solemn League and Covenant' made with Scotland in 1643; yet this was legislation which both had been endorsed by the Long Parliament of that era and which had held out the prospect of closer religious conformity with Scotland. And to add insult to injury, ministers (many of whom had not been anti-royalist and who had welcomed the return of the Stuart monarchy) faced the requirement that they abjure the lawfulness of taking arms against the king or his representatives. Given the active involvement in securing the return from Europe of Charles II by many (especially Presbyterians) who would later refuse to conform, this Act of Conformity was a very bitter pill indeed. Further abrasive legislation was to follow.

The important fourth chapter, contributed by editor Alan Sell, stands back from these historical details and asks what the great Ejectment has been taken to mean at the half-century intervals commencing in 1862 (when it began to be marked with some fanfare) and what it all means in the present. This is richly rewarding material. Sell finds that the commemorators of 1862 and since have not always found the same principles illustrated in or drawn the same lessons from those events. Standing at a point in European history characterised by rampant secularisation and de-Christianisation, he finds it hard to advise readers as to how 1662 teaches us to navigate at this time. Both national churches and nonconformist bodies find themselves in positions of relative weakness; ecumenical discussions—in full swing in 1962—now take place in what he aptly describes as 'winter' conditions.

Yet Sell is emphatic that there are distinctive Nonconformist convictions such as the rootedness of God's church in the work of the Spirit who calls the unbelieving to faith and to holiness (rather than its being primarily rooted in a hierarchy or an institutional structure) that provide crucial compass points as formal and informal discussions take place today among the various churches. This essay is provocative in the best sense of that word.

The Great Ejectment is devoid of the hagiographic element one finds in much literature which exists to commemorate the sacrifices of those who refused conformity. Its strength lies in the fact that it both reflects up-to-date historical analysis of the events of 1662 and their repercussions and provides superlative chapter-end bibliographies which will enable the curious to press on with their own researches. Sell's own chapter is characterised by much accumulated wisdom. One great irony regarding the volume is that it is published in Eugene, Oregon, USA. This must be taken

as some kind of indicator that UK readership for such a critical investigation was not sufficient to make the volume's publication viable there. Wonderfully, in this age of on-line book-buying, this fine volume will be available to inquisitive readers wherever they are situated.

Kenneth J. Stewart, Covenant College, USA

Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism. Edited by Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4938-5. 241pp. £19.99.

Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism edited by Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry consists of nine essays from a group of scholars from the USA and UK. This book aims to challenge evangelicals to critically engage the historical-critical method through proving that both sides of the inerrancy debate are not mutually exclusive, thereby allowing for historical criticism to be profitable for evangelical scholarship while simultaneously upholding inerrancy. The book therefore consists of seven major and controversial historical-critical topics in order to offer an evaluation of the theological impact of historical criticism.

Hays in chapter one introduces the debate between historical criticism and inerrancy. He argues the scholarly and historical development of historical criticism is due in part to the retreat of evangelical and conservative scholars from the realm of academia in the wake of historical criticism. This left a vacuum for historical-critical scholars influenced by the prior work of deist and theologians such as Wellhausen, Hegel and Schleiermacher, who sought to locate the meaning of the biblical narratives somewhere outside of the text.

Chapter two is written by Hays and Stephen Lane Herring and assesses the historicity of Genesis 2-3. It is asked how hamartiology would be affected if critical scholars were right. The authors demonstrate that despite the claims of historical criticism, the essential Christian doctrine will remain on sure footing while some may contend to refine certain points of doctrine.

Chapters three and four offer a critical evaluation of both the minimalist and maximalist approaches to the Egyptian exodus and Deuteronomic covenant. Ansberry identifies the scholarly shortcomings in both minimalist and maximalist approaches, building upon the work of many previous evangelical and historical-critical scholars before him. Ansberry and Jerry Hwang address perhaps the greatest of the historical critic's challenges to the Pentateuch: Mosaic authorship. Addressing the most convincing arguments from historical critics, Ansberry and Hwang dem-

onstrate how an informed evangelical faith can affirm Mosaic authorship with confidence.

The fifth and sixth chapters confront challenges from both the Old and the New Testaments—'Problems with Prophecy' and 'Pseudepigraphy and the Canon'—respectively. Both chapters deal with problems of authorship, claims of textual inconsistencies within prophecies as well as authorship in the New Testament. The authors reveal the discrepancy between ancient and modern suppositions of authorship and textual authority, thereby somewhat alleviating the need to 'prove' Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Chapters seven and eight introduce 'The Historical Jesus' and essentially the 'historical Paul,' and brings to the forefront four of the most debated theological topics of Jesus scholarship: Jesus' self-representation, miracles, the virgin birth and the resurrection. There is also discussion of the historicity and authenticity of the Pauline writings. Michael Daling and Hays purport that the faithful scholar can engage in critical scholarship of the Bible and the life of Christ and simultaneously strengthen evangelical academic positions.

This work contributes to the already well-developed academic debate between evangelical fundamentalism and historical criticism. *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* offers a fresh and deeply committed evangelical perspective on the field of historical criticism and its implication for biblical studies. Ansberry and Hays in the ninth and final chapter challenge evangelical Christian scholars to effectively engage with historical criticism for both the defence and enrichment of the church. Ansberry and Hays offer an evangelical perspective on engaging with historical criticism whereas some contemporary scholars such as James L. Kugel, Bart Ehrman and others use historical-critical methods to supposedly disprove the Bible, or at the very least propose a theological conundrum for evangelical scholars. Ansberry and Hays along with the other contributors to this book provide an enlightening and academically faithful approach to the historical-critical method that is an academic aid for the evangelical to faithfully approach historical criticism.

Blake I. Campbell, Chicago, IL, USA

Evangelization in China: Challenges and Prospects. By Kin Sheung Chiaretto Yan. Orbis: Maryknoll, NY, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-62698-080-8. 178pp. £19.99.

As a long serving member of OMF International, formerly the China Inland Mission, over the past 45 years I have read innumerable books and articles relating to China. Concern for the church in China is embedded

into my life. As I opened this slim volume, I wondered what the author might have to say that would be fresh and engaging. Would I be tempted to skim through it?

From the first page to the last, there was in the event no temptation to skim. Here is not only an up-to-date volume, but also one written in winsome and readable fashion by a scholar who does not hide behind academic jargon. While there are important differences between an evangelical understanding of the term 'evangelization' and a Roman Catholic one, there is also in this book a great deal of value that transcends our doctrinal differences.

Based in Shanghai, Yan trained in Rome and Manila, and is a Roman Catholic scholar who knows how to communicate beyond his own community, despite the subject being firmly the history and current experience of the Roman Catholic Church in China rather than the wider church in that vast country. As with Protestantism, there are officially registered Catholic churches, and the so-called 'underground' system. In the case of the Catholics in China, you can either be a member of the registered churches, with no links with Rome, and a certain level of supervision by state machinery, or if you believe that ongoing connection to Rome and the Pope is the only way of being authentically Catholic, then you have to run all the risks of being unofficial and at the mercy of periodic clampdowns. Well, that's the way the story has usually been told. But is there more to the story?

Yan faces fearlessly the ways in which the Catholic Church often created its own problems in China, and made Christianity unnecessarily alien, and a political threat through its allegiance to Rome. He explores the ways in which those problems could be resolved while still being faithful to Christian truth and values, unpacking some key cultural and philosophical elements of Chinese worldview, both past and present. The overview of the history of Catholicism in China is very helpful, as is the statistical and pastoral survey of its present state. Yan's analysis of some contextualization issues reflects what many Asian Protestant leaders are equally concerned about, and what cross-cultural missionaries in Asia today grapple with all the time. He surveys the historic and current trends in religious policy of the Chinese government, through its often convoluted story.

He then analyses and discusses a number of key recent documents from the Catholic magisterium in Rome relating to the evangelization of China. He looks at negotiables and non-negotiables, and in particular addresses the role of Rome and the papacy, and the issue of how bishops should be appointed (and to whom such bishops should be accountable). He suggests some practical ways in which some of the points of conflict

could be bridged, and how the Catholic Church could be less adversarial than it has sometimes been. He understands and explains the mindset of the Chinese government, and of the specific authorities tasked with oversight of religious activities. Along with many real challenges, he explores the many opportunities for improving relationships and for furthering the growth of the church in China.

While this is all set within the context of the Roman Catholic Church, there is much that is applicable to the wider church in China as well. For Protestants in general, and evangelicals in particular, as well as for Catholics, the question of relationships with bodies and denominations outside China is equally pressing. Those who do not understand this, and do not live and act sensitively (including in the Christian media) can create massive problems for our Chinese brothers and sisters. Likewise, the question of what an authentically contextualized Chinese church should look like, where the Lord Jesus Christ is not made alien and foreign but in the best sense is clothed in Chinese-ness—touches us all, wherever we are in the world, as we seek to mirror the principle of the incarnation: God coming in human form so that we might behold him, and worship.

Rose Dowsett, Glasgow

Sanctified by Grace: A Theology of the Christian Life. Edited by Kent Eilers and Kyle C. Strobel. London: Bloomsbury Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0567383433. 256pp. £22.99.

Sanctified by Grace is both practical and doctrinal, yet these are often portrayed as contrastive disciplines in contemporary literature. The editors and authors are explicitly concerned with systematic or doctrinal theology directed at practice. This is by design. As such, the editors see the task of theology as tied to the practice of godliness. In this way, *Sanctified by Grace* is a unique contribution to both theology and spiritual formation studies.

In order to achieve this unique contribution, the editors arrange the dogmatic loci around the concept of 'grace'. By doing this they are able to fuse both dogmatic issues traditionally discussed by systematic and constructive theologians with practical, devotional, and ecclesial concerns. In this way, the reader will be pleased to know that all of the authors share a united voice in addressing divine activity within theology proper (part 1), redemption (part 2), ecclesiology (part 3), and practice/application (part 4). Part 1 concerns such topics as Trinity, election, creation, salvation, and transformation. The authors of part 2 discuss specific aspects of God's redemptive activity in the work of Christ. In part 3 the authors address Scripture and sacraments theologically, and, finally, part 4 is concerned

explicitly with the practice of discipleship, prayer, theology, preaching, and forgiveness. In what remains, I speak to the unity of the whole, which makes for an impressive and edifying work of theology.

Tom Greggs in the chapter on 'Church and Sacraments' lays out differing ecclesial models, yet he is interested in developing what he calls an actualist model, which he ties to a pneumatological model. What he intends to convey is that the Church is the activity of the Spirit. As the church is in the process of being sanctified and made holy (i.e., set apart), Greggs views this as primarily wrapped up in the Spirit's activity of grace. The reader will notice that this is not simply a distinctive of this chapter, but a persisting theme throughout. As the editors note in the introduction, all of the authors expound upon divine gracious activity (p. 7). Additionally, the editors highlight this as completed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Developing an actualist account of doctrine is a natural lead into the practical content of spiritual formation because all of God's activity directed toward humans demands a human response (e.g., awe, worship, repentance, listening and trust).

Trinitarian and retrieval theology shapes the whole discussion of *Sanctified by Grace*. Driving all of the authors is not simply divine activity but Trinitarian activity rooted in Nicene Christianity. It is not unintentional that the 'Triune God' sets the stage. In chapter 1, Fred Sanders helpfully tackles the foundation and core of the Christian life by situating it in God's life. Sanders argues that the heavenly life meets us in Christ on the earth by coming from the Father above by the Spirit. Sanders traces the basic contours of Trinitarian activity in salvation, thus advancing the conceptual core for the remaining chapters.

One minor concern deserves highlighting. The reader will find that the authors are not interested in either natural theology or rational theology. It appears that the general tone of the authors is decidedly against the role of natural theology as a distinct discipline that serves to ground and account for systematic theology. Furthermore, the authors do not seem to have a place for the distinct activities of rational and practical theology. Thus, it is not surprising that such a critique is reserved for the chapter on theological method. Ellen T. Charry, in chapter 13, explicitly represents this approach to theology. In it she is critical of the theological method that seeks the truth through establishing empirical evidence or coherence. I say this not so much as a critique or to suggest that the quality of the work is somehow denigrated, but to provide the reader with a fuller sense of its content.

Sanctified by Grace is a beautifully inviting work of Trinitarian, traditional, systematic and practical theology. The reader will be challenged, engaged, and edified. With any collection of essays it is difficult to com-

ment on all of its benefits, which is evident here. In the end, I heartily recommend *Sanctified by Grace*. Upon reading, the reader will taste and see that the Trinitarian God is good.

Joshua R. Farris, Houston Baptist University, USA

Adam, The Fall, and Original Sin. Edited by Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan. 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3992-8. 352pp. £17.99.

The scarcity of contemporary literature on Adam suggests a radical shift in how one approaches the Old Testament story of humans and God's redemption therein. Whilst it is now unpopular to speak of a literal Adam, this has not always been the case. *Adam, The Fall, and Original Sin* is a collection of essays where the authors intend to address the complex cluster of issues surrounding a literal Adam and his relationship to the doctrine of original sin. Interestingly the authors are not interested in revising the traditional doctrine of Adam, but defending and clarifying what they construe as the traditional position on Adam's relationship to original sin consistent with the general tenor of Christian orthodoxy.

Adam, fact or fiction? All of the authors answer this question in the affirmative that Adam was a real historical figure attested to in the Scriptures. Furthermore, they affirm a unique metaphysical connection between Adam and the rest of humanity as part of the overarching story of the Bible. Without this link between Adam and humanity, a crucial feature of the core of God's redemptive story is lost. Contrary to some stereotypical assumptions, the thrust of the argument is not the truthfulness of young-earth creationism, old-earth creationism, or, even, theistic evolution for all of these positions may be reconcilable with a literal and historical Adam in relationship to all of humanity (however one might construe that relationship) (p. ix). Instead it is the attempt to defend the necessity of a literal Adam and Eve, a Fall, and the relationship these have to the doctrine of original sin for all humanity, despite the challenges of modern science. In contrast to those challenges, the authors mount a strong case to the contrary that Adam, as the leader of the human race, really did exist.

The reader will find thoughtful reasons for affirming the doctrine of Adam. Chapter 1 offers the reader a persuasive case that Adam is a crucial figure in the whole Old Testament narrative. Arguably, Adam serves as the transition from God's creation narrative to God's intent to restore the world to himself through covenant, but Adam and Eve enact a climactic point in the narrative whereby they invert the design of creation and commit the first and primal sin, which simultaneously brings about

the Fall—the historical transition in Adam from his originally created state to a corrupted state that simultaneously affects all of humanity. The author argues that the Fall is supported by the extensive genealogy used for historical and theological purposes to show this connection between Adam and humanity (also see chapters 9, 10, and 14). The reader will also find extensive New Testament support for the doctrine of a literal Adam as a part of the core for the doctrine of original sin (see chapters 2, 9, and 13). The authors demonstrate that the gospels construe Adam as part of the Christ-history (chapter 2) and central to Paul's understanding of redemption (chapter 9 and 13). In connection to this, the framers (i.e., Reeves and Madueme) see history as an important lens through which to address the doctrine. Lest the reader think that the authors are proposing purely exegetical arguments in favour of Adam and original sin, there is significant engagement with its historical development—which comprises part II (i.e., chapters 4-8). In it, the authors defend the notion that such a traditional view is the dominant view within orthodox Christianity until we reach modern developments of theology (see chapter 8). Finally, the reader will be pleased with the comprehensive interaction between science and traditional orthodox Christian theology.

Whilst it is impossible to evaluate the whole collection of essays, I will limit my comments to some of its contributions to systematic theology and science and theology as they relate to the defence of Adam. First, Madueme and Reeves provide a useful and interesting systematic theological defence of Adam and the traditional notion of original sin (chapter 10). Madueme and Reeves develop a useful distinction of 'originating' sin and 'originated' sin. In the first, 'originating' sin means that the first sin was committed 'at a particular point in time' (p. 210). Otherwise, we must say that sin and evil already existed and is part of human structure. They argue that God's creation was originally good not somehow corrupt as some modern interpreters have suggested (e.g., John Hick), thus requiring an originating sin to account for sin and evil in the world (i.e., theodicy; also see chapter 15). With some persuasiveness, the authors show that a historical Adam makes sense of the 'originated' cause in that not only did sin enter the world at a particular time (i.e., 'originating'), but it came by the agency of a person that bears a heredity and metaphysical relation to the rest of humanity. The authors proceed to discuss how the inherited relationship between Adam and humanity has implications for other systematic categories. Adam provides a continuity and hereditary relationship shared by all human beings (i.e., anthropology), a ground for the depth of sin (i.e., hamartiology), a ground for soteriology and Christology. In the end, the reader may find some of the conclusions too strong; yet, even still, Madueme and Reeves facilitate a helpful discus-

sion of systematic issues involved when rejecting a historical Adam as an originated cause. For sake of space, I refer the reader to the details of the argument and other gems found in Madueme and Reeves's intriguing chapter. Second, Madueme advances the discussion on the methodology of science and theology (chapter 11). Madueme does not shy away from the challenges from the contemporary scientific picture of the world (biological evolution, genetics etc.); instead he affirms that there is, in fact, a *conflict* between the biblical story of Adam (i.e., originated sin) and science or modern interpretations of the scientific data. Creatively and constructively, he offers a way forward (pp. 234-49). In brief, one should begin with revealed dogma as privileged data, thus recognising an initial conflict but with the intent of allowing further dialogue between science and theology.

One interesting matter deserving further attention is the assumption that Adam is naturally (i.e., biologically) related to the rest of humanity through some sort of generative relation, as explicitly pointed out by Donald Macleod (p. 144). I wonder if it is possible to tell a *slightly* different story that still sustains the literal Adam in continuity with the rest of humanity (i.e., a 'common humanity'; see p. 215), thus accounting for the desirables found within the traditional understanding and the physical sciences. Macleod's understanding of natural relation seems to be one of biological generation that is *diachronic* (i.e., the continuous development between discrete individual humans through linear time) in nature beginning with Adam and extending to the rest of humanity. Why not tell a story that begins to approach something like Augustinian realism wherein all humans not only share in a solidarity and are related biologically through an aboriginal humanity (with Adam as a representative), but also where Adam bears a species relation to all of humanity synchronically (i.e., where humanity exists at one point in time, in some sense)—even if he does not biologically generate all individual human bodies through a direct biological line. If a story of this sort were successful, and it seems possible, then one could provide an alternative accounting for Adam's relation, representing an aboriginal humanity that sins, to humanity as the ground for 'originating' sin and the 'originated' sin. This would mean that the world really was not created corrupt by God but is rooted in the choice of or connected to Adam. I realise such a story deserves additional reflection and research, but the question of precisely how Adam and humans are related seems porous enough to allow for other possibilities that are not inconsistent with the story of science or the story of the Bible.

There is much more that could be highlighted in *Adam, the Fall and Original Sin*. I have chosen to highlight just a few reasons why I believe

Madueme and Reeves have done an excellent job clearly setting forth and defending a traditional view of Adam and original sin. In the end, this collection of essays deserves a thoughtful engagement from within evangelicalism and from without.

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The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church. Edited by Khaled Anatolios. (Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-80104-897-5. xvii + 253pp. £20.

Khaled Anatolios has gathered this compilation of essays from a 2008 conference hosted by the Pappas Patristic Institute of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. The aim of the volume is to provide theological resources that equip Christians to discern the presence of the Trinity in the actual life of the church—in Christian faith and practice. Contributors draw principally from the patristic period to clarify the role of the doctrine of the Trinity in the development of early Christianity. Twelve essays are divided into three sections, followed by a concluding essay from highly acclaimed patrologist, Brian Daley. The essays in this book provide an excellent resource for readers able and willing to traverse the contours of Trinity doctrine amid ecclesial life in the Patristic period.

The function of worship in the trinitarian faith of the church is the object of the first part of the volume—'the Trinity in Christian Worship'. Joseph Lienhard commences this collection with an articulation of the role of the baptismal rite in the historical development of a trinitarian rule of faith, which is suggestive of the requisite unity between Scripture, liturgy, doctrine, and theology. Robert Daly contributes an insightful essay on the extensive development that took place before eucharistic prayers were, properly speaking, trinitarian. Paul Hartog contextualizes the putative prayer of Polycarp in *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14 within the spectrum of trinitarian development from Paul's letter to the Ephesians to the creedal statements of the fourth century. Nonna Harrison fills out the first part of the book by proffering an incisive treatment of Gregory of Nyssa on the triunity of all divine activity.

The second section of the book, entitled 'Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and Christian Salvation', gives expression to the revelation of the triune God in the person and work of Christ. In a book focused on the Trinity and the Christian life, John McGuckin's repositioning of the patristic statements on the Trinity as 'liturgical doxologies' is a welcome contribution (p. 75). Following this, Daley presents a dynamic argument about the reciprocity that exists between the trinitarian mystery and the person and work of Christ, such that in his discussion of John of Damascus and Maximus the

Confessor, Daley contends that conformity to Christ leads to trinitarian communion. Matthew Drever avers that Augustine was the proponent of a deification that is trinitarian in structure, a model of participation in the divine, which is not merely contained by its Platonist concepts, but is, to the contrary, apt for dialogue with Orthodox notions of deification. In the only reprinted essay of the volume, Bruce Marshall contributes a 'magisterial' treatment of the reception of deification in the thought of Martin Luther. It is by virtue of a trinitarian account of salvation, Marshall argues, that both the forensic and transformative aspects of Luther's doctrine of justification obtain.

In 'the Trinity and Ecclesial Being,' the third part of the book, contributors approach the participation of the church in the triune life of God. Khaled Anatolios begins this section by arguing, against the overextended assertions of contemporary scholars to the contrary, that there is continuity between notions of personhood in patristic and modern theology, such as the conception of persons as 'intentional, active, speaking agents.' Contemplation of the capacity of these persons to enter into relationship with one another is suggested as a motivation for the church to participate in the divine life. John Behr follows this with a careful commentary on the nature of the church as an extension of the trinitarian relations, yet as still in pilgrimage toward the eschatological fulfilment of its own perfection, such that complacency remains inexcusable for true members of the Christian faith. Thomas Cattoi then submits a controversial claim that qualifies the 'Ravenna Document' forged by a consortium between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church. Cattoi recognises this document funds a relationship of 'unity without inequality' between local churches, but he then suggests Gregory of Nyssa's conception of the Father's monarchy as a means to maintain the primacy of the Roman Church within the previously agreed upon equality. In the final essay of part three, Kathleen McVey tenders Ephrem the Syrian as a patristic pioneer for using female imagery in speaking of God while remaining cognisant of the limits of applying human language to a transcendent God.

Finally, Daley offers a conclusion to the book in which he illustrates the reticence of contemporary Christians, ministerial and lay persons alike, to approach God in his triunity by highlighting the avoidance of preachers to speak of the Trinity on Trinity Sunday in the liturgical calendar. Daley attempts to combat this present state of affairs by suggesting that, instead of trying to contemplate God by virtue of an analytic rendering of the persons and essence of God, contemporary believers contemplate the triune God by means of their participation in him. When the trinitarian structure of Christian life is rightly understood as an exten-

sion of the mission of Christ, believers are empowered to experience the transforming power of the Spirit in themselves and the world.

The essays in this volume together form a historically meticulous and ecumenically promising contribution to recent scholarship on the role of 'The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church.' Although this book works at clarifying the trinitarian shape of Christian faith and practice, it is not simply one among the many standard accounts of the Christian life. It will be a demanding but informative read for the lay believer, and, for the Christian well-versed in patristic theology, a most enriching read. The call of the editor for 'the renewal of trinitarian theology' to 'provide the resources to enable ordinary Christians to see how the inner contents of Christian faith and its outward vision of all reality are entirely permeated by the self-manifestation of the trinitarian God' (p. x) remains an important task for future theological consideration.

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Evangelicals and Culture. By Doreen M. Rosman. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-227-68034-6. vii + 196pp. £20.00.

The rather complicated story of Evangelicals and their interactions with surrounding culture has produced a number of deeply-rooted presuppositions. For example, Matthew Arnold's adage that Evangelicals 'developed one side of their humanity at the expense of all the others' has, according to Doreen Rosman, led many scholars to conclude that Evangelicals were, to one extent or another, cultural Philistines (p. 1). Rosman's aim in this volume is to explore whether the perspective of Arnold and his sympathisers is truly representative of the breadth of Evangelical Christianity in Great Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. Evangelicalism, she writes, 'has suffered from the failure of historians to give due attention to its special literature' (p. 6). Supported by a vast array of primary source documents, *Evangelicals and Culture* portrays a wide-angle view of Evangelical engagement with British culture.

The book begins with an overview of British Evangelicalism from 1790-1833. This timeframe encompasses the founding of many of the major societies and periodicals that would go on to influence Evangelicalism for the rest of the nineteenth century. From there, readers are introduced to a set of theological characteristics that are helpful toward classifying Evangelicalism. This chapter introduces a recurring theme, namely that 'evangelicals shared in the tastes and interests of the more cultured of their contemporaries… but were unable to justify their enjoyment within the terms of their world-denying theology' (p. 31). With this theme firmly established, the subsequent chapters elaborate upon the relationship of

faith to a variety of recreational pursuits. A chapter on 'Faith and Fashion', for example, explores the varying degrees to which Christians from different backgrounds approached the topic of dress. Another provides a thorough investigation of Evangelicals and music. In these chapters, readers are introduced to a wide range of Evangelical perspectives, across a denominational and socioeconomic spectrum. These perspectives span from positions that resemble Matthew Arnold's aforementioned critiques to others who offered far more relaxed attitudes toward modes of entertainment. One rather informative section surveys Evangelical reactions to the emergence of the novel. Some criticised the medium, while others attempted to convey Christian theology through literature, much to the dismay of others.

These examples illustrate the breadth of Evangelicalism's engagement with culture. The greatest treasure here is a robust interaction with a variety of primary sources. Evangelical periodicals are well represented, as are a number of personal letters, diary entries, and other archival materials. Readers will find several well-known Evangelicals making appearances within the text, and the nature of this project casts light not only on their professional work but on their home lives as well. As such, readers are introduced to William Wilberforce as both a champion of human rights and a loving father who spent a great deal of time with his children. Further examples of Evangelical participating in recreation include anecdotes on cricket matches, hunting, and the occasional oratorio. In addition to Wilberforce, several other noteworthy Evangelicals including Hannah More, Jabez Bunting, and Charles Simeon make frequent appearances throughout the various chapters. While there are many positive elements to this study, there are a few drawbacks. First and foremost, the thematic organisation of the chapters occasionally constrains the reader from establishing a timeline by which Evangelical positions on the various topics shifted. Furthermore, some of the chapters are noticeably shorter than others. This is particularly apparent in the discussion on Evangelicals and music, which scarcely covers ten pages. These drawbacks, however, are rather minor in comparison to the overall contribution of the volume to the field of Evangelical history. While one imagines this book is largely aimed toward an academic audience, the vivid portrayal of early nineteenth century Evangelicalism provides an enlightening perspective to anyone interested in Christian history.

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Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction. By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-310-49441-6. 912pp. Available from <http://www.thinkivp.com/9780310494416>. £28.99.

Having appointed Michael Bird to his first job, as a New Testament lecturer in Highland Theological College, I was somewhat surprised to find him moving into the territory of systematic theology. That surprise was tempered, however, by the knowledge that Mike churns out books at an extraordinary rate and has a huge capacity for hard work. It was perhaps inevitable that one day he would try to give the 'big picture' of how he sees evangelical theology. That he should do it at this early stage in his career demonstrates courage.

The book begins with a dramatic claim: 'This book was written for one reason. There are a lot of good theology textbooks written by evangelicals, but I do not believe that there is yet a genuinely evangelical theology textbook—a theology textbook that has its content, structure, and substance singularly determined by the evangel.' (p. 11) Throughout the volume there is a consistent and fairly successful attempt to achieve this objective.

If there is a downside to a biblical scholar writing a systematic theology, and doing so at a popular level, it is that we tend to get numbered lists of important points, each supported by Scripture, rather than an explorative dogmatic theology in which the material flows from one theme to another, with development and analysis, as in the more traditional systematic theologies. The section on the Trinity is a good example of this.

The book is divided into eight parts. Part one is concerned with prolegomena, where he lays out his case for a systematic theology which is driven and controlled by the nature of the gospel itself. Part two is concerned with the doctrine of God, dealing with the Trinity, the nature and attributes of God and God's work in creation, revelation and redemption. Part three (surprisingly) is where eschatology makes an entrance, looking at the return of Christ, judgement, the intermediate state and so on. Part four is concerned with Christology, with the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Part five is concerned with salvation, focussing on how the gospel reaches and transforms lost sinners. Part six deals with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Part seven is concerned with anthropology, the image of God, sin and the human condition. Part eight lays out a doctrine of the church which is gospel-created and gospel-centred.

This layout of the book is somewhat puzzling. To deal with eschatology and the return of Christ in part three, before dealing with the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ in part four, is difficult to

understand. Also, to leave anthropology and the definition of the human condition until part seven, when we have already discussed salvation in part five, seems illogical.

On the positive side, this is a book which men and women in the church who have no theological training will find helpful and refreshing. One of the purposes of the book was to reach a wider audience than is normally reached by a 900 page systematic theology and this objective will almost certainly be realised. Mike has a light touch and writes in an engaging and homely way, avoiding complex language where possible and presenting the material in a popular and accessible manner. This reviewer would have preferred if the jokes had been left out but anyone who knows Mike's zany sense of humour will not be surprised to see them!

Mike's personal ecclesiastical pilgrimage enables him to write with a certain understanding of various traditions within evangelical theology. Mike was a Baptist while in Scotland and then worshipped in a Presbyterian Church in Brisbane, before becoming an ordained Anglican minister after moving to Ridley College in Melbourne. Having now self-identified as an Anglican in the Reformed tradition, he is nevertheless quite willing to challenge the tradition where he feels it has made mistakes. This means that there are some areas where Mike has taken a somewhat controversial line, not least in his understanding of covenant theology, a particular interest of this reviewer. This is almost certain to bring down upon him the wrath of those who are more traditional in their Reformed theology and who prefer to stay securely in the 'old ways'.

It is almost inevitable, when trying to write a book covering the whole gamut of theology, that there will be sections of the book where Mike's statement of a doctrine, analysis of the views of a particular writer, or summary of an historical debate, could use some editing or correction. For example, on page 191 he gives the impression that Barth is orthodox and reformed in his doctrine of the atonement, yet many theologians would question whether Barth's ontological and incarnational approach to understanding the atonement can really be classified in this way. These flaws, however, do not take away from the grandeur of the overall project.

If you want to read a systematic theology that is centred on the gospel and on the life of the church, then you will find this a fascinating and enjoyable read.

A.T.B. McGowan, University of the Highlands and Islands

The Person and Work of Christ: Understanding Jesus. By A.T.B. McGowan. (Christian Doctrine in Historical Perspective). Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-84227-749-2. xiv + 183pp. £15.99.

Christ and his work of redemption are the centre and focus of the Christian faith, so we can always welcome a book which offers a careful, biblical account of the Saviour and his salvation. The welcome should be even warmer if the volume is clear and accessible. Andrew McGowan has written just such a volume. He explains that the book is written for both theological students and thoughtful Christians. It would serve well for a church study group or as an introduction for beginning students. It offers clear summaries of biblical material and historical debates and some suggestive applications to Christian living.

Each chapter focuses on a discreet topic and most present a survey of the relevant biblical material and a review of some of the relevant historical and contemporary debates.

After a general introduction to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and revealer of God who came to save sinners (chapter 1), McGowan presents Christ as divine (chapter 2), noting pre-Nicene adoptionist views and later liberal rejections of orthodoxy. The next chapter (chapter 3) treats the true humanity of Christ. McGowan argues that Christ's humanity should be regarded as 'unfallen' (against the view of T.F. Torrance) and that this is a consequence of a federal theology in which 'Christ took exactly the same pre-fall humanity as Adam' (p. 31). He notes that the humanity of Christ has not been as controversial as his divinity (p. 34), and gives a very brief account of docetism and moralistic monarchianism. Apollinarianism and monophysitism effectively deny Christ's true humanity and could have been considered in this chapter.

Chapter 4 offers a consideration of the Son as the second person of the Trinity, looking at his relationship to the Father as expressed in the gospels. The chapter also has a discussion of the place of the Holy Spirit in the person and work of Christ and concludes with a discussion of Nicea. The inclusion of the discussion of the Spirit, which is an important topic, makes this chapter less integrated than others. Students would also be helped with analysis of how eternal sonship relates to Jesus' incarnate sonship.

The next chapter (chapter 5) considers the hypostatic union, focussing primarily on the Chalcedonian definition while noting some post-Chalcedonian discussion. The account of Chalcedonian Christology seems to rely on dated scholarship. It would be useful to include an account of Douglas Fairbairn's *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford

University Press, 2006) which shows that the debate has to be understood in terms of its soteriological implications.

Chapter 6 is something of a surprise, since it deals with Christ's exaltation. The surprise is two-fold. First, McGowan has not presented a discussion of the humiliation of Christ, which usually pairs with exaltation in a Reformed Christology; though it is implicit in his treatment of the incarnation (p. 64). The second surprise is that the ascension and return of Christ are (rightly) presented as the completion of his work, yet the earlier aspects of his work are yet to be discussed. This chapter would probably be better placed later in the book. The chapter has the only significant account of historical-critical approaches. After summarising these views, McGowan argues that the dividing lines between those who accept Christ as divine and those who do not are, first, naturalistic or Christian theistic presuppositions and, second, differing views of Scripture.

The next four chapters treat the work of Christ, primarily understood in terms of penal substitution. The chapter which covers the work of Christ in general (chapter 7) deals with him as the last Adam who redeems his people through his active and passive obedience. This is complemented by a discussion of Christ as the only Mediator with an extended account of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God. The chapter is rounded out with the doctrine of Jesus as the great High Priest. So we are given four complementary perspectives on the work of Christ.

The following chapter (chapter 8) deals specifically with the nature of the atonement, arguing that 'penal substitution… encapsulates most fully the breadth and depth of biblical teaching' (p. 108). The argument is first that Christ's death is consistently associated with a penalty for sin and that Christ is presented as a substitute. Isaiah 53 and Romans 3 are presented as two key passages which support penal substitution. In this chapter McGowan refers to penal substitution as a 'metaphor' for the atonement. I suspect it is better to describe it as a 'theory' or 'model' of the atonement, since there are few if any biblical passages which present it as an explicit metaphor. The key biblical passages, as McGowan notes, relevant to penal substitution use sacrificial imagery.

Chapter 9 presents a theological argument for penal substitution. McGowan notes that any view of the atonement presumes an anthropology and that federal theology guided the development of penal substitution as a full blown account of the atonement. After giving this context he summarises Packer's justly famous article "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution", *TynBul* 25 (1974): pp. 3-45 to present the case that penal substitution is the 'the heart of the matter' (p. 128). Most of the rest of the chapter is a summary of recent challenges to penal substitution, particularly those from 'neo-orthodoxy' (prompted by Barth) and

revisionist evangelicals. The discussion of the neo-orthodox view will be helpful for theological students. In a few pages it lays out a range of related challenges, which McGowan reports sympathetically and then considers McCormack's proposal for a view of penal substitution which would using Barth's ontology. McGowan does not give an explicit assessment of this proposal but clearly has questions about it. While the brief discussion will frustrate readers who want to see the case developed and critiqued in depth, a full consideration would take more room than the book allows. The review of revisionist evangelical critiques is more piecemeal and the argument against them is primarily that they fail to offer a clear account of what the cross does achieve. The chapter finishes with a summary of Packer's essay, 'The Atonement in the Life of the Christian' in *The Glory of the Atonement* , ed. by Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (IVP, 2004), pp. 409-25. Here Packer reaffirms his view of penal substitution but warns of 'undue narrowness' (quoted by McGowan, p. 141). McGowan agrees with Packer that the atonement should not be isolated from God's larger work of redemption, that penal substitution is key to understanding the atonement but should not be the only way in which it is described and that its importance should be maintained in association with the view that 'the taproot of our entire salvation… is our union with Christ himself by the Holy Spirit' (p. 141).

The final chapter on the work of Christ (chapter 10) engages the ongoing debate about the extent of the atonement. Here McGowan offers a robust defence of the classic Reformed view that 'Christ died for a specific and definite group of people, the elect, who will certainly and unavoidably be saved' (p. 148). He reviews the Arminian alternative, which he dismisses briefly, pointing out that it operates with different views of sin and grace than the Reformed view. He gives a more detailed and sympathetic review of Amyraldianism, and I expect the readers of this work will be more interested in the intra-Reformed discussion. McGowan is clear that he considers Amyraldianism to be problematic, yet he takes it seriously and does not call it a heresy or place it outside the Reformed pale. He notes the texts which support a universal atonement and points to this issue as one on which Reformed theology should do more work. Presumably, McGowan would consider David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (eds), *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* (Crossway, 2013) a significant attempt to do this.

The book finishes with two chapters which would not be part of a traditional Reformed presentation of the person and work of Christ, but which certainly belong in the book. Chapter 11 summarises the doctrine of union with Christ, emphasising the 'ontological' dimensions of redemption alongside the forensic. We are reminded of the connec-

tion between what is achieved by Christ and how that is enjoyed by his people. The final chapter notes the philosophical, political and religious reasons which lead people to reject the claim that Christ is the only saviour. (McGowan refers to 'arguments' but it is not clear that the reasons are arguments in anything but the most general sense.) His response is to summarise the evidence from Acts 4 and 17 that the apostles presented Christ as the only saviour (pp. 178-82), appealing to Van Til's argument that a true account of Christ must be built on a Christian philosophy. The implication is that the 'arguments' against the uniqueness of Christ are only convincing on non-Christian assumptions.

Throughout the book McGowan's convictions about the authority of Scripture and his commitment to classic Reformed evangelical theology are evident. The discussion of the significance of the title 'Lord' for Jesus (pp. 18-20) and his presentation as the Lamb of God (pp. 87-98) are points where McGowan moves beyond summaries of biblical material to more constructive interpretations. In several of the other exegetical discussions students could be at least alerted to alternative views. The discussion of the biblical presentation of the divinity of Christ could be bolstered with a discussion of the work of Hurtado and Bauckham.

The Person and Work of Christ is a survey work and so, inevitably, it raises issues which it cannot deal with in detail. McGowan appeals to federal theology several times and offers some brief defences of this, promising a fuller defence in a future book. McGowan is a presuppositionalist (and includes a personal anecdote about the influence of Cornelius van Til). This approach in a small book covering a wide scope of theology means that some major debates are dealt with quite briefly—with an appeal to presuppositions. Students will need wider reading to grasp the strength and importance of some alternative views. Some fuller references, suggested further reading especially in recent works and indices would also make the book more useful for students.

The most likely frustration for most readers of this book will be that it falls somewhat between being a popular work and serving the needs of students. Students would benefit from fuller treatment at some points; those with more pastoral and personal interests may want more illustration and application. Nevertheless, both groups can benefit from it. It is not written to advance new or idiosyncratic views, but to show that the classic Reformed account is true to Scripture and the orthodox faith of the church, spiritually nourishing and relevant in the modern world.

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The Good God: Enjoying Father, Son and Spirit. By Michael Reeves. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-84227-744-7. xvi + 112pp. £9.99.

The emphasis in Michael Reeves' helpful short primer on the Trinity is on the verb in the title. The aim of his book is to move believers from ignorance about the glorious depths of the triune being not simply to knowledge, but to delight and to discovering Father, Son and Spirit as the wellspring of Christian devotion and joy. It is, by turns, a triumph of accessibility and a master-class in effective education as Reeves seeks to move our hearts as well as stretch our minds.

After an Introduction, the book consists of five short chapters followed by a Conclusion. The flow of the five main chapters is instructive about Reeves' chosen way of teaching the doctrine. Chapter 1 asks, 'What was God doing before Creation?' and chapter 5 draws together the theological implications of each of the preceding chapters to ask, 'Who among the gods is like you, O Lord?'. In between chapters 1 and 5, Reeves gives us a chapter on each person of the Trinity and these form the heart of the book: the Father's love and creation; the Son and salvation; the Spirit and the Christian life. But chapters 1 and 5 mean that Reeves prefaces his study with a commitment to the Trinity as the most foundational truth there is to say about God and concludes with a commitment to the Trinity as the most distinctive truth there is to say about God. In other words, if we don't begin our thinking about God with the Trinity we will go astray; and if we don't grasp the glory of the Trinity we will be close to completely ineffective in our witness and stunted in our understanding of three pivotal areas (God's holiness, wrath and glory). The Trinity begins our speaking about God, and at every point the Trinity drives the content of all that we may say about God.

The benefits of this book are clear. It would be an excellent first introduction to the Trinity for students or laity. Reeves manages to introduce, explain, illustrate and apply tricky concepts with both historical awareness and theological finesses. His writing style is chatty and humorous, and it will be up to each reader's tastes as to whether this is attractive or irritating. Regardless, this becomes less noticeable as the book progresses and what dominates is a passionate presentation of the goodness of God as Trinity. The book achieves its aim; I was drawn to Father, Son and Spirit as I read and moved to worship. In many ways it is a more popular and accessible version of something like Donald Fairbairn's wonderful treatise on the Patristic doctrine of God, *Life in the Trinity* (IVP Academic, 2009). Both volumes read the shape of Christian theology and the

doctrine of salvation off the doctrine of God and the shape of the triune relations.

It is worth noting that Reeves' method could be open to significant challenge. For while he is entirely right in chapter 1 not to locate God's identity in his work as creator, Reeves' clear intention is to implicitly critique *any* talk about God which seeks to study him apart from beginning explicitly with his triune relations. (An example of this alternative approach is Richard Muller's massive treatment of the divine essence and attributes in his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, volume 3, *before* treating the triunity of God in volume 4).

Reeves stresses that before 'he ever created, before anything else, this God was a Father loving his Son' (p. 3). The point is well taken, of course, and yet Reeves himself acknowledges, for instance, that the heart of the Athanasian rebuttal of Arius was the contention that the Son is the *eternal* Son. This means that within the tradition—and within Scripture itself (Hebrews 1:3)—there are significant and valid precedents for reflections on the divine essence and attributes which inform, and are informed by, the divine relations. Reeves begins with 'What was God doing before Creation?', but note how the question already accents the answer towards the works of God. It could be just as appropriate to ask 'Who was God before he was Creator?', which might accent the answer more towards the being of God as well as towards the works of God. Not all talk of God which does not take the Trinity as its explicit starting point is automatically unchristian, or even non-Trinitarian. None of this, of course, takes away from Reeves' worthy achievement. It would be a shame, however, if one *ordo docendi* ever came to be absolutised as the only right way to teach the beauty and wonder of God the holy Trinity.

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One Year to Better Preaching: Fifty-Two Exercises to Hone your Skills. By Daniel Overdorf. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8254-3910-0. 319pp. £11.99.

One Year to Better Preaching is an excellent and innovative resource that would help any preacher bring God's word more faithfully and creatively to their congregation. Overdorf encourages the reader to think of it like homiletical cross-training. The fifty-two exercises cover eight different categories of homiletical skills, sharpening a variety of preaching tools throughout the year. There is no shortage of books on better preaching, but Overdorf's offering is a manageable piecemeal training course that even the busiest pastor would find invigorating rather than onerous.

Although the exercises would be very useful for the novice, the book is written for experienced preachers who are ten, twenty-five, even forty years out of seminary (p. 9), and have slipped into using the same few approaches and patterns for sermon preparation and delivery. The aim to is dust down each tool from the homiletical toolbox, and sharpen them one by one throughout the year. Each exercise covers just four or five pages, and could be profited from usually in less than an hour, ideally at the start of the week's preparation, and integrated into that Sunday's sermon. Each chapter engagingly and informatively identifies the area for development, describes the week's exercise, often with worked examples, and finishes with a short of list of resources for further study. Many of these resources are available as online articles, and, very helpfully, are accessible all on one page on the publisher's website. There is also an 'I tried it' section which gives testimonials from individuals who have benefited from the particular exercise. This may appear a little contrived at first, but not only is it encouraging to read of real ways in which others have grown, but it also shows that these exercises have been thoroughly road-tested through Overdorf's long career as a preacher and trainer of preachers.

The eight areas the exercises cover are 'Prayer and Preaching', 'Bible Interpretation', 'Understanding Listeners', 'Sermon Construction', 'Illustration and Application', 'Word Crafting', 'The Preaching Event', and 'Sermon Evaluation'. Some of the exercises are fairly predictable, like #2 'Balance Your Biblical Diet', encouraging the preaching of every genre of Scripture—wisdom literature, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic, as well as narrative and epistles. But the exercise itself is hugely helpful—not pointers for the preaching of each genre, but a review of all sermons preached over the past three to five years, to ensure that congregations truly are receiving the whole counsel of God. Less predictable are the exercises focussed on 'Understanding Listeners', with ideas like 'Speak to Three Learning Styles' (#3), 'People Watch' (#11), 'Preach with Women in Mind' (#21), and 'Go to Work With a Church Member' (#41). Particularly helpful are the exercises on 'Word Crafting'—'Show, Don't Tell' (#6), 'Craft Evocative Words' (#33), 'Write for the Ear' (#49), and 'Write in E-Prime' (#17). The chapter on E-Prime (a grammatical adjustment that can make speech flow with more dynamism) is a good example of the creative challenge Overdorf often brings in these exercises, forcing the preacher to review old habits and think of new and fresh ways to communicate God's word. Other innovative ideas included 'Utilize the Five Senses' (#13), 'Hang the Sermon on an Image' (#28), and 'Encourage Texting During Your Sermon' (#31).

Much of the book focuses on techniques of sermon preparation and delivery, but there is also spiritual depth here, both for the preacher and the congregation. Exercises on 'Pray Through Your Sermon' (#44) and 'Pray for Your Listeners' (#22) are included, as well as an encouragement to 'Commission a Sermon Prayer Group' (#1) complete with daily prayer points which can be emailed to the congregational group, who will then meet to pray before or even during the delivery of the sermon.

Each exercise can be tackled alone, but the bite-sized nature of almost all means that, if a preacher is in the pulpit each Sunday and following a regular weekly preparation pattern, this homiletical cross-training course can be completed in a year and provide energy and impetus to the preacher, and really help engage the hearers in God's word.

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Honey from the Lion: Christianity and the Ethics of Nationalism. By Doug Gay. London: SCM Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-334-04647-9. 219pp. £19.99.

In this timely book, Doug Gay attempts the huge task of normalising political nationalism in order to construct a Christian political theology of nationalism. Gay openly reveals his indebtedness to Jonathan Hearn, the Edinburgh-based anthropologist, in a vision which weaves thinking from the disciplines of political philosophy, anthropology, sociology, history and poetry into a wide-ranging and practical political theology that desires a compatibility with nationalism. It must be said early on that Gay believes this vision extends past that of a 'No' vote at the referendum.

In order for this project to be theologically viable, Gay draws upon three distinct Christian traditions to help rigorously deal with issues of public policy. The Reformed tradition (to which Gay belongs as a Church of Scotland minister) has charisms of stewardship, vocation and discipline to offer Scottish society towards revisiting 'tellers' of vigilance for an unbridled banking sector. In addition, the seventeen Roman Catholic Papal encyclicals provide deep charisms that (i) all men and women have inherent human dignity and (ii) that we are to work as a society towards the common good of all others. And the Radical Reformers offer the charism of self-discipline within the church so as to demonstrate new cooperative economic models of witness. Drawing upon these three differing Christian traditions provides a very clear ecumenical flavour to Gay's project.

In his chapter on assessing the biblical story—which informs what he wants to build—Gay draws unashamedly from the creation narratives which reveal an *imago Dei* in all human beings. This is fundamental to his

project. The creation narratives all help to answer the question 'What are people for?' (p. 42) as he seeks to unpack what kind of society we should be. Gay argues that the biblical vision of creation provides the answer. As the book title suggests, he employs a creative interpretation of the Samson story about honey discovered in the corpse of a lion as a metaphor for the relationship between political theology and political ethics, between power and virtue.

Drawing upon thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo, Oliver O'Donovan, Nicholas Wolterstoff, Luke Bretherton, Duncan Forrester, and Eric Gregory, Gay seeks to provide a political ethics that does everything in light of *imago Dei* to be generous to 'the other'. For example, he describes the scene of the tower of Babel to show the origins of human heterogeneity, from which he points to the New Jerusalem, via the significance of Pentecost, as the fulfilment of celebrating a harmonious heterogeneity. Such biblical narratives are potent, he argues, towards having a political ethics of nationalism that will never fall prey to the trap of fascist regimes.

The final five chapters, then, seek to flesh out his vision. There is a fascinating and brief history of the rise of the Scottish National Party in the chapter 'Evolution to Devolution', which leads on to why Gay believes the party is of great significance to Scotland as a whole. From there he pens the most enjoyable chapter of the book 'Tasting Notes', where he seeks to honestly talk about that which Scottish devolution has done well and that which it has not. This is a surprisingly candid and fair chapter where the real disappointments and lack of political efficacy are called out as much as the good. The following chapter 'Calling Time' seeks to show why it is time Scotland should go independent as result of his theological working, as summed up by the following quote: 'The need to be reflective and self-conscious about the risks of theo-political visions, does not mean that such risks should not be taken' (p. 135). 'Transforming Scotland' discusses some social issues that are in great need of an overhaul. Lastly, 'Constitutional Questions' seeks to tackle the enormous areas of the monarchy and the place of religion in an increasingly secularist Scotland.

In conclusion, what makes this book stand out in its constructive suggestions is its authentically Reformed heritage. Gay draws deeply upon the best of Scottish Reformation history, the best of Presbyterianism, its confessions, its psalter, and its past and present relationship with the Scottish state, to probe towards a legitimate compatibility between the Christian faith and a Scottish nationalism.

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