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Edited by
Calvin L. Smith
Stephen M. Vantassel

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

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Articles

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Introduction

Calvin L. Smith

About

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

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

About...

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

Core Values

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

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

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Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical tradition are invited from across the disciplinary spectrum. Given the broad and interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter covered by the journal, contributors should refer to our core values and submission instructions, which provide further details of material suitable for inclusion.

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Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Articles





Open Theism and Beyond A Challenge to Evangelicalism

Sylvie Avakian

KEYWORDS:

| Open Theism | Evangelicalism | Christian Theology |
| Free Will vs. Predestination | Orthodox Theology | Divine Love |

ABSTRACT:

On the topic of Open Theism, which is a theological stand within Evangelicalism, this article presents first its major themes, in contrast to the position of Classical Theism, some indications of the present discussions on the topic will follow. Then, some critical remarks and finally concluding statements toward a possible movement from a conservative and classical position to a more open and free theological stand within Evangelicalism, will conclude the article.

The article argues mainly that since Evangelicalism, throughout history and by the nature of its reality, has not insisted on the metaphysical and speculative dimension in theology and has not been the victim of institutionalized systems; Evangelicalism remains a potential field for reception of the open views on God and the Christian faith. In this sense Open Theism persists as a challenge within Evangelicalism, and for it, in order that it might move beyond all constraintment and limitation.

INTRODUCTION: EVANGELICALISM AND OPEN THEISM

It is possible to trace back the history of Evangelicalism in Europe and North America to the 18-19th centuries and even earlier, if one considers a general definition of Evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is often used as a synonym to ‘Protestantism’ and particularly to ‘Lutheranism’. In some more particular sense Evangelicalism refers to pietistic and revivalist reforms in the 18-19th centuries. In the late 19th century fundamentalism became a distinguishing element of some evangelical theologians, known as the Princeton theologians,¹ who led a revolt against the so-called ‘theological liberalism’. Further, Evangelicalism refers to a conservative protestant coalition which emerged in the 1940s, rejecting fundamentalism, and having many reformed theologians, and also Arminians, as its leaders, thus forming the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the Evangelical Theological Society and other organizations. It is intriguing, however, to explore the changes in Evangelical theology, in the more particular sense of the term, and the new possibilities to move from a conservative-pietistic position toward more critical revisions and endorsement of open views on God and Christian faith.²

Biblicism, personal conversion and evangelism have been characteristics of Evangelicalism throughout centuries. However, and since Evangelicalism has not insisted on metaphysical or speculative theology, which treats in abstract-intellectual form some theoretical truths of Christian faith, thus, it has not been bound to certain propositions and

1 This article was originally presented as a lecture at the *Freie Theologische Hochschule Giessen* on October 28, 2013.

1 Some of the Princeton theologians are: Charles Hodge (1797-1878), Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921) and John Gresham Machen (1881-1937).

2 See: R. E. Olson, “Confessions of an Arminian Evangelical” in *Salvation in Christ: Comparative Christian Views*, R. R. Keller & R. L. Millet (eds.), (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 183-203. Accessed online: <http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/salvation-christ-comparative-christian-views/9-confessions-arminian-evangelical>

theories and also has not been the victim of institutionalized religious systems, Evangelicalism remains a potential field for the reception of the open views on God and Christian belief. The present article perceives such an attempt in Open Theism, which has been a movement, within Evangelicalism, from conservative toward more critical reconsideration of the theological claims, maintaining the need to revise and reexamine the Christian theological heritage. Throughout the article I will refer to Open Theism (also Free-will Theism or Relational Theism) in contrast to Classical Theism.³ Classical Theism designates the traditional view of God as it was shaped throughout centuries in the West through the works of Aquinas, Anselm, Augustine, Calvin and others, and it was adopted in most circles of Evangelicalism. On the Other hand, Open Theism addresses Classical Theism and through it the conservative Evangelical position.

In this paper I aim at presenting the essential arguments and themes of Open Theism, in contrast to the position of Classical Theism. Some indications toward the contemporary discussions and some critical remarks, concerning Open Theism as it presents a critical revision of the Evangelical heritage, will follow. I close the article with concluding observations.

THE MAJOR THEMES OF OPEN THEISM

In its description of divine attributes Classical Theism has most of the times started with metaphysical considerations of divine being, concentrating on the abstract attributes such as divine omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability and omniscience. Thus, God has been perceived as absolute perfection, immutable substance and pure actuality

3 See: A. Rhoda, "The Philosophical Case for Open Theism" in *Philosophia* (2007) 35, 301-311, where Rhoda defends Open Theism vis-à-vis its two opponents, what he calls "theological determinism and the various forms of non-open free-will theism, such as Molinism and Ockhamism."

(pure act, *actus purus*) with no possibility for any potentiality or being concerned or troubled by the world.⁴ On the other hand Open Theism, based on the biblical statement “God is love”, perceives God as the God who enters into relationship of love with the human subject and awaits for his/her response, so that it would be possible for the human being to have a collaborative, interactive relationship with God. Accordingly, God, in Open Theism, accompanies the human being and even suffers with his/her suffering. In this sense it is possible to speak of Open Theism in terms of relational theology. By this, Open Theism has been an attempt to depart from the Augustinian position concerning the questions of original sin, grace and predestination.

Open Theism further aspires to replace conservatism with a deeper sense of the evangelical Protestant reality in the twenty-first century, and aims at entering into dialogue with contemporary theological positions and with sciences rather than maintaining polemics against them. In its endeavor to endorse more open views on God and Christian Faith Open Theism comes close to the theology of the Church Fathers and Orthodox Theology, particularly as it emphasizes love and freedom as they are procured through divine grace, the work of the Holy Spirit and the image of God given to the human being from creation. Hence love and freedom bring the human being to participation in God and to the final union of all things in God.⁵

4 This notion goes back to Aristotle’s claim that according to the metaphysical order the two highest principles are actuality *ενδελέχεια* and potentiality *δύναμις*. Actuality is perfection and fullness of Being, while potentiality is imperfection and incompleteness. The former is the determining, the latter the determinable principle. Actuality precedes potentiality since there is no potency in things existing from eternity in relation to their own existence. Both principles are found in all beings, with the exception of the Supreme Cause, in whom there is no imperfection, and therefore no potentiality. God is pure actuality [*Actus Purus*] the Greek term [*energeia*] *ἐνέργεια* refers to this pure act that refers to the First Mover [*proton kinowon*] *πρῶτον κινῶν*, who is unchanging and everlasting, while all other beings are composed of actuality and potentiality. See: D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 29; D. Allen, *Philosophy For Understanding Theology*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 127, 131; F. Copleston. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol.1, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 315- 316.

5 See on this: T. J. Oord, B. Montgomery & K. Winslow (eds.), *Relational Theology: A*

I. GOD'S COMMUNAL NATURE VS. GOD AS STATIC BEING

In his essay "God Everlasting" Nicolas Wolterstorff maintains the personal and relational nature of God. Wolterstorff speaks of God as everlasting rather than God as eternal.⁶ He explains that the notion of God's eternity implies God's timeless reality, that is to say that God is outside of time and that God views all events of history, past, present and future simultaneously or at once. Contrary to this, the Biblical image of God as everlasting implies that God exists and acts within history, i.e. through all of time, however without having a beginning or an end. In this second sense it is possible to speak of God as temporal, maintaining that God does not know the future. Wolterstorff concludes that "God's life and existence is itself temporal", incorporating "changeeful succession",⁷ as God is involved through redeeming acts in history.

Since the mid-1970s open theists have challenged Classical Theism's perception of God as static perfect being.⁸ They maintained that Western Classical theology has most of the times missed the point of God's relational and communal nature. Some theologians, who are the proponents of the so-called Open Theism,⁹ such as Clark Pinnock (1937-2010), William

Contemporary Introduction, Point Loma Press, 2012, 11, 18-23, 28-30.

6 Christian theology, as the result of the influence of Greek philosophy and particularly Neoplatonism which considered the highest form of reality as an eternal being, has perceived God as eternal being who exists perfectly and changelessly.

7 N. Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting" in N. Wolterstorff & T. Cuneo, *Inquiring About God*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 155.

8 It is possible to trace the beginnings of Open Theism to mid-1970s, with the publication of several articles, which has challenged classical theism's perception of God as static perfect being. Later, in 1994 Clark Pinnock and four other open theists published *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*. See: C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker & D. Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

9 Most of these theologians come either from the classic Arminianism (also called the Remonstrants, who were condemned at the Synod of Dort [1619] as they objected to the Belgic Confession and Calvin's teachings, claiming divine election on the basis of foreseen faith, universal atonement and resistible grace. Thus, rejecting the doctrine of total depravity and the perseverance of the saints) or the pietistic Evangelicalism

Hasker (1935-), John E. Sanders (1956-) and Gregory A. Boyd (1957-), have called for reform and reconsideration of the traditional notion of God.¹⁰ Pinnock criticized the dominance of rational, propositional and fundamentalist approach in evangelical theology as being a ‘distorted mode’ which has exaggerated the legal dimension of salvation at the expense of divine grace.¹¹ These theologians attempted to depart from classical Aristotelian metaphysics, moving toward relational metaphysics. They have presented, what they call, biblically faithful revisions of the claimed doctrines,¹² emphasizing that the biblical description of God speaks of a God who exists within time, who is passionately involved in human history and is always responsive to the incidents of the world. Sanders argues that there is a “shared context between God and the creation”.¹³ Through creation God enters the context of the created order and communicates with the human being by means which are not strange to human history, language and spatiotemporal reality. Consequently any attempt to speak of a god who is beyond creation and human-worldly reality is senseless and futile. Of course this would not mean that God does not exist apart from the world, yet, whatever the human being knows of God, that is because of God’s relationship to the world. Sanders quotes

of the 18th century (John Wesley). Some of them are also called postconservative evangelicals (the term is from Roger Olson). In their attempts to reexamine some aspects of the traditional doctrine of God, postconservative evangelical theologians expressed God’s personal nature through different emphases: Open theism, the social God project of Stanley J. Grenz, and Miroslav Volf’s notion of God as reconciling love. See: R. E. Olson, 2007, 218-219.

10 R. E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing group, 2007), 226. Also: R. D. Moore, “Leftward to Scofield: The Eclipse of the Kingdom in Post-Conservative Evangelical Theology”, *JETS* 47/3 (September 2004), 424.

11 C. Pinnock & R. C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century*, (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000), 8. Pinnock criticizes mainly Augustine and Calvin in this regard. (The same reference p. 9)

12 R. E. Olsen, *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 127. By this, Open Theism attempts to depart from classical Aristotelian metaphysics, moving toward relational metaphysics.

13 J. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 24. Open theists maintain that their theological paradigm has greater fidelity to the Bible and to the true divine nature and it answers more profoundly the questions of faith-application in the lives of the believers. See: J. Sanders, 1998, 19.

Hebblethwaite's words: "If God creates a temporally structured universe, then, whatever his own eternal being may be, he must relate himself to his creation in a manner appropriate to its given nature, i.e. temporality."¹⁴ Sanders also refers to the Cappadocians, who have maintained God's dynamic and responsive characteristics in relation to human beings. God's responsive nature implies God's affectedness by the human position; however this is only made possible through God's freedom.¹⁵ Richard Rice writes:

[Open theists perceive] "God's relation to the world in dynamic rather than static terms. This conclusion has important consequences. For one thing, it means that God interacts with his creatures. Not only does he influence them, but they also exert an influence on him. As a result, the course of history is not the product of divine action alone. God's will is not the ultimate explanation for everything that happens; human decisions and actions make an important contribution too. Thus history is the combined result of what God and his creatures decide to do."¹⁶

Referring to a statement from the Church Fathers: "God became man, that man might become God,"¹⁷ Pinnock explains that God, through the Son and the Spirit, came down to the depth of the human reality, making the human ascent to God possible.¹⁸ In his *Flame of Love* Pinnock refers many times to Irenaeus (a 2nd century Church Father) who claimed that the divine call and the human response shape together a divine-human unity which is the final purpose of the whole creation. The final human-divine union, however, is to be fully attained only through death. "Death is the moment of our return to God",¹⁹ says Pinnock. Thus, death is the

14 B. Hebblethwaite, "Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence and Divine Foreknowledge" in *Religious Studies* 15, no.4 (1979), 436.

15 J. Sanders, 1998, 146-147.

16 R. Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective", in C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker & D. Basinger, 1994 15-16.

17 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.19.1; Athanasius *On the Incarnation* 2.54.

18 C. Pinnock, 1996, 151.

19 *Ibid.*, 182.

culmination of the union, “the moment of fulfillment” and the end of the journey toward God.

II. DIVINE SELF-RESTRAINT VS. PREDESTINATION

Classical Theism argued that because of the Fall human nature suffers corruption and thus it is the slave of sin. Therefore, any human-divine co-operation or synergism is not possible, since it would compromise the element of grace in relation to salvation, making it both human and divine achievement.²⁰ Augustine repudiated any possible change in God’s will and maintained divine immunity to all relationships with creation. For Augustine every event is decreed by God, even the death of a child, claiming that God must have good reasons for that. Augustine’s theology has shaped most Western Classical Theology throughout centuries, particularly the Middle Ages.²¹ Aquinas claimed that God is pure actuality, with no potential, since God is eternally actualized. Hence, there is no ‘becoming’ in God.²² At the time of Reformation, though Martin Luther’s theology of the cross has affirmed the relational nature and will of God, however, on the other hand, Luther also described the hidden and the ‘inscrutable’ will of God, by which God has predestined the salvation of some while damning the rest.²³ Luther claimed that God “does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his.”²⁴ Similarly Calvin has followed Augustine in claiming divine predestination of some to eternal

20 R. E. Olson, 2004, 187.

21 J. Sanders, 1998, 147-149.

22 *Ibid.*, 152.

23 M. Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 33, Career of the Reformer*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 138-140. See also: M. Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976), 73.

24 M. Luther, 1972, 140. See Luther’s discussion of Rom. 8:28 in M. Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1976), 127-132. J. Sanders, 1998, 153-154.

damnation.²⁵ Most Reformed churches, following Luther and Calvin, considered their position as the only authoritative orthodox teaching on the question of predestination and free will. However, not all evangelical churches adhered to this doctrine. Those churches, with Arminian-Methodist background rejected it, and they had leading roles in forming Evangelicalism as we know it today. Later on, in the twentieth century, open theists have reaffirmed their rejection of the traditional reformed doctrine of predestination, moving even beyond classical Arminianism.²⁶ Open theists maintained that through creating free human beings God has limited Godself and God's foreknowledge.

Richard Rice explains saying:

“As an aspect of his experience, God's knowledge of the world is also dynamic rather than static. Instead of perceiving the entire course of human existence in one timeless moment, God comes to know events as they take place. He learns something from what transpires. We call this position the “open view of God” because it regards God as receptive to new experiences and as flexible in the way he works toward his objectives in the world.”²⁷

Thus, God is involved in historical activities, where there are no guarantees for success.²⁸ Further, divine self-restraint is out of love. God voluntarily has decided to create free human beings who can make free choices as they respond to the creative loving act of God. God desires

25 J. Sanders, 1998, 155-156.

26 Though defending human free will, James Arminius (1560-1609), the Dutch theologian who protested against the Calvinistic doctrines, nevertheless had maintained high view of divine providence, which is not comparable to the position of Open Theism. According to Arminius God performs the good while permits evil. On the other hand Open Theists deny that God “specifically permits every evil act”; rather they maintain that there are accidental events within creation. See: J. M. Hicks, “Classical Arminianism and Open Theism: A Substantial Difference in their Theologies of Providence”, in *Trinity Journal* 33, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 8, 14. Concerning the relationship of Open Theism to Arminianism see: S. M. Studebaker, “The Mode of Divine Knowledge in Reformation Arminianism and Open Theism”, in *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 47, No. 3, (Summer 2004), 469-480.

27 R. Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective” in C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker & D. Basinger, 1994, 16.

28 C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker & D. Basinger, 1994, 88-89.

that we freely respond to God’s love and choose to enter into a dynamic relationship with God. Thus, human beings have the freedom either to accept or to reject the love of God, namely to act according to divine will or against it. Only through such freedom the human being will be responsible for his/her decisions. This is the risk God takes through creation, as many people might reject God’s love and live in opposition to it.²⁹ In his *The God Who Risks* Sanders explains that God not only shares existence with the human being but also power. Human beings are God’s “co-creators such as we are to collaborate with God in the achievement of the divine project.”³⁰ He continues to explain that God has not intended an unchanging creation. Thus, challenging God and even God’s wisdom is not impossible for the human subject. God, however, continues to care for the human being and even modifies the situation in order to provide for him/her.³¹

III. HUMAN FREEDOM: AN ELEMENT OF DIVINE IMAGE

Contrary to the traditional position of Classical Theism which claimed that God resolves whether to give grace or to withhold it from the sinner and thus whether the sinner will be saved or damned, Open Theism enhances the human responsibility, freedom and the capability to accept the divine work of salvation. Open theists argue that genuine love is free; it can never be compelled or predestined. Human beings are given the freedom and the responsibility to care for God’s creation and for the neighbor. Pinnock explains that any relationship which lacks the dignity of freedom to reject divine grace and to choose not to love the Other would lack the basic elements of love. In our loving response to God, God does not

29 C. Pinnock, “Constrained by Love: Divine Self-Restraint According to Open Theism”, in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 34, No. 2 (Summer 2007), 149-150.

30 J. Sanders, 1998, 44.

31 *Ibid.*, 47-49.

determine our actions. God does neither decide for us nor dictate on us the way we should follow. If human beings are granted free will, then free decisions and acts could not be foreknown. God wants free partners who freely accept God's love and respond to it. The human response to God matters only when the response is free rather than an already determined one. In case the human subject had no freedom of will to react in relation to God's salvific work, such a response would never matter. That would have meant that God previously had determined who of us would respond positively to the call of God and who would reject and deserve a final damnation.³²

Sanders refers to Gregory of Nyssa (a 4th century Church Father), who had maintained that the human being can freely determine him/herself, without necessarily being the slave of any worldly bondage.³³ Pinnock also drew on the position of Eastern theology, as it views freedom as an essential element of the image of God, according to which human beings are created. Thus, divine grace does not contradict human freedom. Grace is already given to all human beings; however the human subject has to participate freely in accepting divine grace in one's life in order to experience its efficacy and enter into fellowship with God.³⁴

IV. THE OPEN FUTURE

In contrast to the Westminster Confession which declares that "[i]n [God's] his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature; so as nothing to him is contingent or uncertain",³⁵ Sanders maintains that the future is

32 C. Pinnock, 1996, 158-161.

33 J. Sanders, 1998, 146.

34 C. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1996), 160.

35 "The Westminster Confession of Faith" in Philip Schaff (ed.), *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1990), 3: 607.

open for both God and the creatures.³⁶ According to Pinnock “[h]uman beings are unique among creatures in their openness to new possibilities. They are free to move beyond present situations . . .”³⁷ God knows all that can be known, however, God cannot know the contingent future; since the future is open for different possibilities. In this perspective, the future is not pre-determined. Thus, the main argument of Open Theism concerning the future is about its nature. Though God knows all the future possibilities for the universe, yet God does not know the one choice, at every incident, toward which the world will proceed, since future contains genuine possibilities, rather than settled facts.³⁸

Further, and contrary to the Arminians’ claim that God “previews” all of history, meaning that God simply “sees” all of history, past, present and future, timelessly, without necessarily determining or causing it, contrary to this, open theists maintain the improbability of divine foreknowledge. Open theists claim that God’s foreknowledge is incompatible with human free will. In several works Pinnock argues that God limits God’s knowledge and chooses to leave the future open so that there is more space left for human free will.³⁹ Further, they argue that, if we presume God’s foreknowledge of all the history, namely of all the choices to be made, this would not assume any providential care of God for the universe, since God would be unable to intervene in history or act in a way different than what God already knows in advance. This contradicts with the notion of God accompanying the people, guiding them and preventing from them all harms, since God would be unable to change already foreknown events, rather whatever is foreknown would surely happen. As a result a God who foreknows everything can do nothing to change of whatever is going to occur. Hence, open theists maintain that only through conceiving

36 J. Sanders, 1998, 75.

37 C. Pinnock, 1996, 75.

38 G. A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001), 17.

39 C. Pinnock, “God Limits His Knowledge” in D. Basinger & R. Basinger (eds.) *Predestination and Free Will*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

the future as open prayers make sense, since then God would be free to act in ways different than their regular course and will be able to guide and advice those who ask for God's guidance and advice. God kindles within the human being and persuades him/her to respond to God and thus, both God and the human subject decide about the future. Therefore the works, of both God and human beings, matter. They together shape the future. God reacts to the human works accordingly.

V. THE UNIVERSALITY AND FINALITY OF DIVINE LOVE

In contrast to the classical notion of sovereign grace, and the doctrine of predestination and double predestination (Westminster Confession 3.3), Pinnock maintains that God's creative love embraces all humanity and that God "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Even though the human response to divine love is distorted by sin, God's love never fully vanishes or fades away. Thus, God is to be perceived as a parent rather than a judge, who aims at reconciliation and takes initiative in calling humanity to a restored relationship with Godself.⁴⁰ Pinnock explains that the God of the Scripture is merciful to both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 11:32). "The nations will be gathered—Assyria and Egypt alongside Israel will constitute the people of God in that day (Is 19:25)."⁴¹ The history of religions is the ongoing history of competition, apologetics and wars. However, the love of God is for all. The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection does not discriminate, it does not condemn (John 3:18), it brings hope to the forgotten, righteousness to the impious, comfort to the wicked, life to the dead (Rom 15:13).⁴²

Thus, Pinnock argues for the universality of God's love. He says: "I

40 C. Pinnock & R. C. Brow, 2000, 8-9.

41 C. Pinnock, 1996, 189.

42 Ibid., 188-189

myself think it more biblical to speak of God loving rather than electing the world, and retaining the term “election” to refer to a choosing of some on behalf of the many.”⁴³ Speaking of God’s universal love does not invalidate “the uniqueness and the finality of Jesus Christ”. “Jesus is the only way to God the Father, to God who is boundless love.”⁴⁴ However, God’s love is given to all, who lived before and after Christ, through grace. Thus, all who accept divine grace and love and the salvific work of the Savior, though implicitly, are given the possibility of salvation. All who live lives of faith and love reflect the light and the love of God that is given to them freely.⁴⁵

VI. RESPONSIVE LOVE AS DIVINE REALITY

Richard Rice claims that “From a Christian perspective, love is the first and last word in the biblical portrait of God. 1 John 4:8 makes it clear that “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Rice continues: “the statement God is love is as close as the Bible comes to giving us a definition of the divine reality.”⁴⁶ Thus, maintaining that love “discloses God’s inner reality” and that it “is the very essence of the divine nature.”⁴⁷

As maintained earlier, the nature of the future is an essential question for Open Theism; however, what really is controversial about the position of Open Theism is its claim that God responds to human beings and thus God is affected by the human response and therefore undergoes change. And by this Open Theism departs from the metaphysical approach that Classical Theism has long defended. Love is a primary attribute of God,

43 C. Pinnock, *Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 25.

44 *Ibid.*, 101.

45 *Ibid.*

46 R. Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective”, 18.

47 *Ibid.*, 19.

while other attributes such as holiness and justice are elements of divine love. Pinnock maintains that the divine attribute of love is prior to the attribute of wrath. He says: "We must say that God *is* love; we cannot say in the same way that he *is* wrath."⁴⁸ God evokes our free response and Godself gets influenced by our responses and works and responds to us accordingly. "God enters into reciprocal, give-and-take relations with creatures."⁴⁹ "That God changes in some respects implies that God is temporal, working with us in time ... God is everlasting through time rather than timelessly eternal."⁵⁰

Love presumes a lover who loves in freedom and a beloved who accepts love in freedom. Thus, as Sanders says: "love is given freely and is received freely ... God not only gives, he receives. God freely chooses to be affected by his creatures—there is contingency in God's relation with creation".⁵¹ God freely allows us to become God's lovers and partners. Love, in the words of Pinnock, is "the very nature of God and therefore the environment of eternity".⁵² God as responsive love is a God who condescends to the human reality endowing it with genuine free will and responsibility to respond to God through free decisions and acts. God as responsive love is a God of unconditional love and reconciliation, who gives up "God's self in order not to give up on humanity."⁵³

48 C. Pinnock & R. C. Brow, 2000, 9.

49 J. Sanders, 1998, 75.

50 Ibid., 8. Some open theists argue that there was no other path possible for God the Father and the Son, while the cross has become inevitable. They explain that before Jesus' crucifixion Jesus prays three times: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want" (Mt 26:39). Jesus does not want to drink from the cup of death, as if he shows some hesitancy and asks for the removal of death rather than for strength to make the journey. This indicates that the path of the cross has emerged as the result of God's interaction with human history. See: J. Sanders, 1998, 100-102. On the other hand R. Rice and G. Boyd argue that the cross was in the divine plan from the beginning. See: G. A. Boyd, 2001, 45. See also J. Carson, "The Suffering God and Cross in Open Theism: Theodicy or Atonement?" in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37, No. 3, (Fall 2010), 324.

51 J. Sanders, 1998, 169.

52 C. Pinnock, 1996, 151.

53 M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 126.

Hence Christianity, from the perspective of Open Theism, is not about a metaphysical abstract perception concerning divine power and might, predestining some for salvation and others for damnation.⁵⁴ God also does not desire to plan every detail of the future, rather, apart from all this; God longs for the free response of love of the human subject and for his/her participation in God's work. In this sense Open Theism claims to be faithful to the Reformed Evangelical tradition, considering the Gospel as the foundation of Christian faith, knowing that the heart of the Gospel is the message of divine steadfast love and mercy given to all.

SOME CRITICAL REMARKS

Throughout this article it was not my purpose to defend Open Theism as being bereft of philosophical or theological inconsistencies.⁵⁵ Similar to most theological systems Open Theism has its shortcomings and deficiencies, most of which are the outcome of the attempt to adjust some older theological assertions and literal interpretation of biblical Christianity in order to conform to that which is more modern, namely the contemporary manners of thought. Hence, a major inconsistency in the theological framework of Open Theism arises from its partial agreement with Process Theology, while, on the other hand, holding fast several classical or traditional theological positions, such as the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, divine freedom to overcome human freedom, divine intervention in order to prevent evil and divine necessity apart

54 Open Theism shares with Process theology the notion that God works with the human being by means of persuasion. However, the ontological presuppositions of each of the two differ from the other. God in Open Theism is perceived as a personal God, who chooses freely to relate to the human being and it is not imposed on God, as Process Theology implies. Also, another difference concerns the doctrine of creation. Evangelicals claim creation out of nothing, rejecting pantheism, while process theologians deny creation out of nothing and are pantheists (the interdependence of God and the world).

55 For a reference to the criticisms of Open Theism see: D. M. Woodruff, "Examining Problems and Assumptions: An Update on Criticisms of Open Theism" in *Dialog*, 2008, 47, Issue 1, 53-63.

from the world.⁵⁶ Open theologians succeed to avoid biblical inerrancy, nevertheless conflicts arise from the fact that Open Theism, or Relational Theism, remains a compromise between upholding the primacy of the Bible as authoritative for theological method and the more liberal positions in Christian Theology, and hence, it oscillates between typical conservative and liberal epithets.

Open Theism further faces the question of how time is perceived within its particular philosophical framework. If God has created time, which is somehow implied in the belief in *creatio ex nihilo*, doesn't this assume that God is outside time? How can the claim that God exists apart from the world correspond to God's working and relating to human beings within time? The tension is then between God's "eternal being" and God's claimed "temporality". To say that God creates, and yet, enters the created order and works throughout its time and history, and also Sander's statement that "God is everlasting through time rather than timelessly eternal" would need more expansion.

From the more conservative front, Open Theism has been criticized by some evangelical Calvinist theologians, such as Norman Geisler, Millard Erickson, John Piper, John Frame, Thomas Schreiner and Bruce Ware.⁵⁷ Those theologians claimed the frailty of the position of Open Theism, maintaining the lack of piety of their representatives and also the

56 Pinnock writes: "God not only created the world *ex nihilo* but can, and at times does, intervene unilaterally in earthly affairs." C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker & D. Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, 156. See on this: Thomas Jay Oord, *The Nature of Love: A Theology*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 102-106.

Roger E. Olson describing the difference between Open Theism and Process Theology writes: "All open theists affirm *creatio ex nihilo* while process theology denies it. All open theists affirm God's omnipotence while process theology denies it. All open theists affirm the supernatural and miracles while most, if not all, process theologians deny them. Open theists all say that God limits himself; process theology represents God as essentially limited and finite." "Open Theism: A Test Case for Evangelicals", accessed online: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogerolson/2010/08/open-theism-a-test-case-for-evangelicals/>

57 Some of those works are: N. Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of God?* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997); B. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2000), J. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism*, (Philipsburgh: P & R, 2001).

inadequacy of their biblical loyalty. Thus, several attempts were made, particularly in the years 2002-2003, in order to expel open theists from the different evangelical circles, particularly the Evangelical Theological Society.⁵⁸ However, as mentioned earlier, open theists and the so called Postconservative Evangelicalism (first used in 1995) do not claim to depart from the Evangelical tradition but to reconsider it in the light of God's highest revelation in Jesus Christ, taking into consideration the givens of a postmodern age. In this sense, Open theists and postconservative evangelicals claim to maintain the 'hallmarks' of evangelical faith and aim at a biblical reformation.

Coming to same later developments, several of open theists have been involved in dialogue with Process Theology.⁵⁹ Dialogue between the two theological positions has been somehow a movement toward the other.⁶⁰ A major contemporary advocate of open views on God is Thomas Jay Oord, who recognizes Open Theism as belonging to a wider umbrella, namely Relational Theology, which incorporates Process Theology, Liberation and Feminist Theologies.⁶¹ Oord continues to maintain love as a primary divine characteristic, nevertheless, he takes a step beyond Open Theism toward Process Theology by rejecting *creatio ex nihilo* and maintaining that divine love of the world is not the outcome of one

58 D. W. Jowers, "Open Theism: Its Nature, History, and Limitations" *WRS Journal* 12/1 (February 2005), 6.

59 In the reference given in the following note: *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*, Clark H. Pinnock, William Hasker and Richard Rice are involved in dialogue with Process Theology.

60 Some of the works that considered positively the contribution of Process thought to Evangelicalism were the writings of J. Culp, "A Dialogue with the Process Theology of John B. Cobb, Jr.," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 17 [1980], 33-44, and his "Is Mutual Transformation Possible? The Dialogue between Process and Evangelical Theology," in *Process Studies* 37 [2008], 104-113. Also: C. Pinnock & J. B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). This last work is a good reference for the dialogue between the two contemporary American theological perspectives: Process Theology and Open Theism, which demonstrates the similarities and the differences between the two positions. (E.g. on the question of divine freedom see: 62, 73, 217-218.)

61 T. J. Oord, Brint Montgomery & Karen Winslow (eds.), *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*, 3.

creative act, rather it is an essential element of divine nature.⁶² In place of *creatio ex nihilo* Oord suggests what he calls 'essential kenosis', denoting by it divine steadfast self-giving love, which does not coerce the human being to give any positive response to it.⁶³ Through 'essential kenosis' Oord succeeds, to some extent, to avoid the problem of evil that emerges in most conventional theologies, even in the position of Open Theism as it defends *creatio ex nihilo*. Further he declares theology and science as dialogue partners rather than competitors, through his panentheistic position, as a substitute to the conventional position of divine interventionism.⁶⁴ However, the contributions of Open (or Relational) Theism continue to be denounced and reprimanded by the more conservative camp,⁶⁵ and the debate between open views on God and the more conventional approaches continues.

CONCLUSION AND A FUTURE PROSPECT

The purpose of this article was not to recommend one theological position over against another. Neither was merely to approve newness and progressiveness, at the expense of the traditional and the classical, as there could be much meaning and worth in the old as in the new. Why then the search and the strive for newness, and what is special in Open Theism that deserves reading and writing about? In order to answer this question, and in order to come to a conclusion, I will have to refer back to a term that appeared in the introductory part of this article designating

62 T. J. Oord, *The Nature of Love: A Theology*, 101-106.

63 Ibid., 122-129, 132-141.

64 See: T. J. Oord (ed.), *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engage Science*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009). Some of the other contributors to this work are: Gregory A. Boyd, Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice and John Sanders.

65 Some of the contemporary critics of the 'open' perspective are Thomas P. Flint (a leading proponent of 'Molinism') and Jonathan Kvanvig. See Kvanvig's critique of Open Theism: J. L. Kvanvig, *Destiny and Deliberation: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 65-83.

Open Theism, namely ‘Free-will theism’. Similar to the term ‘Open Theism’ ‘Free-will Theism’ indicates the core of this particular position. Having Open Theism in mind, I contend that the notion of ‘free-will’ is particularly significant when considered in its three different implications. First, it indicates the free will of the human being in responding to God. As it has been maintained, Open Theism claims that God created free human beings and desires their free response. Salvation occurs when the believer responds freely to the divine call, namely he/she willingly makes space for God within one’s life, lives and serves in freedom and only then one is liberated of all prejudices and convictions that he/she has inherited and which imprison him/her within an impenetrable cell of fears and worries. Second, ‘free-will’ involves as well the Other. This is to say that no one has the right to judge the Other as faulty and untrue, while considering the self as privileged and deserving salvation. Only by respecting the freedom of the Other that dialogue between different theological backgrounds, or even between different religions, is made possible. Open Theism maintains that the salvation implemented through Christ embraces all humanity. All are called to give their lives back to God as their free response to the creative divine love. All are called to become the sons and the daughters of God.

Third, ‘free-will’ also denotes the free will of God to love God’s creation, to care and provide for it in many different ways, which are beyond our understanding and grasp. This is to say that it is not possible to delineate every aspect of the divine reality and to describe every attribute of God perfectly. God is beyond human thought and theology. God is beyond our understanding and any capability of utterance. God is free, or better to say God is free Mystery. Here lies the strength of Evangelicalism in general, as it has not become the victim of speculative propositions and theories, as it has been previously explained. Theology can do harm and damage to Christian faith whenever it is perceived as the tool to control God and have ownership of God while excluding Others and eliminating divine freedom. God, in freedom, comes to the depth of the human reality,

experiences suffering and even death. Jesus accepts death in freedom, and in this the possibility of complete divine-human union is to be found. "Death is the moment of our return to God" as Pinnock says. Hence, death is "the moment of fulfillment" and the end of the journey toward God.

In the light of the previous remarks, Open Theism has succeeded in making many steps forward toward open and free understanding of the self, the Other and God. Through the major themes of Open Theism it has been demonstrated that it aspires toward freedom by rejecting predestination, and it maintains the universality of divine love which embraces the Other rather than excluding all that is different from one's own self. Further, the contribution of open theists, to Evangelicalism in particular, is their engagement in critical thinking and also their eagerness to be involved in dialogue and conversation with Orthodox theology and also with the contemporary theological positions in mainline Protestantism rather than disapproval of their positions.⁶⁶ Such attempts of reconsideration and revision, however, would require continuous work of reform and reexamination which might challenge all inviolable beliefs so that all traces of fundamentalism are surmounted and a new understanding of the Word of God is made possible.⁶⁷

Hence, the article challenges both Open Theism and Evangelicalism to move forward beyond all constraint from the past toward making a free and open response to God possible. Open Theism remains a half-way solution between what has been established and approved in the history of Western—Augustinian—tradition and what a potential 'open' reformed perspective might contribute to theology. Evangelicalism's emphasis on individual piety, rather than resorting to institutionalized faith, and its insistence on human freedom are two main elements which support and promote the move beyond fundamentalist perspectives and narrow readings of the Scripture toward a spiritual interpretation of the holy texts, which bring a deeper reformed-spiritual value to the Word of God

66 R. E. Olson, "Postconservative Evangelicalism: An Update After A Decade", 7. Accessed online on 08.08.2013: www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5209W.pdf

67 See: R. E. Olson, 2004, 128.

and to the Christian experience in our contemporary times. What path could Evangelicalism take for the consideration of a forward movement for its theological perspectives is however to be resolved from within Evangelicalism itself, as it bears the potential for such a move. Finally, the search and the strive for newness are necessary, and such necessity is certainly related to the apostle's commandment: "be transformed by the renewal of your mind". (Rom.12:2)



A Critique of American Evangelicals’ Abstinence Position on Alcohol, from Pre-Prohibition to Today

John. J. Johnson

KEYWORDS:

| Alcohol | Bible | Prohibition |
| Christianity | Moderation | Evangelical |

ABSTRACT:

This article seeks to show that the anti-alcohol sentiment among many North American evangelical Christians is misguided, for several reasons. One, the Bible condemns only the abuse of alcohol, not its use in moderation. Two, evangelical prohibitionists claim that wine in biblical times was watered down and therefore not intoxicating. But this is incorrect, as the wine’s alcohol content would have been equivalent to modern “light” beer, and therefore still capable of producing intoxication. Three, the anti-alcohol position was almost unknown during the first 1800 years of the Church, so its emergence in the United States in the 19th century is biblically and theologically suspect. And four, evangelical hysteria over alcohol was partly responsible for the Volstead Act, which outlawed alcohol in the United States from 1920 to 1933, is now generally viewed as a political and moral failure.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Spring 2008 edition of the *Criswell Theological Review*, there were two papers published concerning the issue of the Christian and alcohol. One of the papers, Kenneth L. Gentry Jr.'s "The Bible and the Question of Alcoholic Beverages," took the position that drunkenness is a sin, but that the Bible permits moderate drinking. The other paper, Richard Land and Barrett Duke's "The Christian and Alcohol,"¹ took the position that the Bible teaches that any consumption of alcohol is a sin which must be avoided. In this paper, I hold the position of moderation that Gentry maintained his essay, and also wish to suggest some things that might make his position even stronger, while at the same time pointing out some of the weaknesses inherent in the position of Land/Duke. In addition to Land/Duke's work, I will also be considering the anti-alcohol position advocated by Norman L. Geisler's "To Drink or Not to Drink: A Sober Look at the Question."² My goal is two-fold. One, to show that the Bible, as well as Church history, are firmly in the moderation, not the abstinence camp, regarding alcohol. And two, to examine the 19th and early 20th-century Evangelical movement in the United States and why it was so vehemently anti-alcohol, when conservative Christianity in Europe was not.

First, let me state that I fully agree with all of the writers above that the Bible does indeed condemn drunkenness. Examples of this abound

1 "The Christian and Alcohol," Richard Land and Barrett Duke, and "The Bible and the Question of Alcoholic Beverages," Kenneth L. Gentry, *Criswell Theological Review* 5/2 (Spring 2008); 19-38, and 39-52 respectively. This entire issue of *Criswell Theological Review* was devoted to the alcohol question. An additional "moderation" piece found therein is Bill J. Leonard's "'They Have No Wine': Wet/Dry Baptists and the Alcohol Issues," 3-17. Leonard makes a powerful case for the moderation viewpoint. I originally contacted *Criswell's* editor to ask if he wanted to publish my contribution to the debate, but he kindly informed me that it is generally not the journal's policy to revisit topics once an entire issue has been devoted to them.

2 Dr. Geisler's article, "To Drink or no to Drink: A Sober Look at the Question," is an internet-only piece, the link for which is located on *Criswell Theological Review's* website, criswell.wordpress.com.

in scripture to the point where they hardly need to be cited. And I also believe, as Dr. Geisler has pointed out, that alcohol use has an enormous social cost (medical problems, domestic violence, drunk driving, etc.) that cannot be denied. In fact, I think it is safe to say that alcohol probably causes more misery for society than all illegal drugs combined. I do not have statistics at hand to prove this, but just consider how many thousands are killed and badly injured by drunk drivers in the United States each year. There is no evidence that people who, for example, smoke marijuana, are responsible for such a high degree of carnage on our roadways (although, of course, illegal drugs do cause various types of personal harm to those who use them). And when we consider that alcohol is a legal drug, it stands to reason that many more people will abuse it than would abuse illegal narcotics.³ Based on this, my advice to a young Christian, or even a non-Christian, would be to avoid alcohol, as the potential harm it can cause probably outweighs any benefits it might produce. Indeed, there is always the danger of alcoholic addiction, so rather than take the chance of becoming an alcoholic, it seems best if one simply does not begin drinking at all. If Geisler and Land/Duke took this position and stopped there, I would be in full agreement. But when they insist that all social drinking is prohibited in the Bible,⁴ and when they imply that even moderate drinking should probably be categorized as sinful behavior, I must respectfully part company with them, the reasons for which I will explain in this essay.

3 Despite the obvious harm caused by alcohol abuse, I certainly do not favor a return to Prohibition. Nor do Geisler and Land/Duke, based on their respective essays.

4 Geisler does abandon his total abstinence position under extreme conditions, for instance, when alcohol can be used as a sedative or pain-reliever, as Proverbs 31:6 instructs: "Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish." Geisler also rightly notes that Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:23 suggests that alcohol can be beneficial for stomach ailments (p. 9).

II. HOW STRONG WAS BIBLICAL WINE?

Both advocates of moderation and abstinence can point to numerous passages in the OT and in the NT that lend support to their position, so this alone indicates that the Bible does not condemn *all* drinking in the way that Geisler and Land/Duke suggest. Kenneth Gentry, in his above-mentioned article favoring moderation, shows through exegesis of various OT texts that the abstinence position is not the correct one. In fact, since there are so many condemnations of heavy drinking in scripture, especially in the OT, we can be fairly certain that wine was commonly drunk by the ancient Israelites, and that its common use led, on many occasions, to its abuse. After all, virtually all ancient civilizations had some form of intoxicating beverage or herb that they used for religious ceremonies, or often for pure recreation. It is doubtful that the ancient men and women of the Bible were any different from their pagan neighbors in this regard. In fact, we know from the OT's condemnations of idolatry and religious syncretism that the ancient Jews were *too* much like their pagan neighbors in many ways. "The use of wine was universal among all classes with the exception of those who had taken a vow of abstinence, such as Nazirites and Rechabites. The priest also had to abstain but only when on duty in the sanctuary."⁵

Dr. Geisler knows that scripture makes numerous references to biblical figures drinking alcohol. Indeed, he recognizes the fact that the biblical world was suffused with this substance. But he makes a distinction between what the Bible terms "strong drink" (which he claims was forbidden) and wine, which was acceptable to drink because it was usually diluted with water. "Studies of ancient customs reveal that biblical wine was fermented, but it was also diluted 3 to 1 when used as a beverage or in connection with the Passover or Communion.... At a 3 to

5 James Hastings, ed., "Wine and Strong Drink," in *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1963), 1039.

1 ratio it would take over 20 glasses of NT wine to get drunk!⁶

First, it is not a settled matter that wine in the Bible was always mixed with water. It does seem to have been the pagan practice to do so,⁷ but why would God's people be always obliged to imitate them? Evangelical scholar Walter A. Elwell says the following. "The evidence, however, seems to indicate that in the OT, wine was used without being mixed with water. The terminology of mixing water and wine is strikingly unattested. Wine diluted with water was symbolic of spiritual adulteration (Is. 1:22)."⁸ And even if wine was cut with water, we have no evidence that this was *always* the case in biblical times.

Regardless of how wine was or was not diluted in OT times, I have no quarrel with Geisler's belief that it was, at least sometimes, mixed with water in NT times. But, if drinking any amount of alcohol is sinful, would not even a mixture of pure wine and water contain enough alcohol to violate the Bible's alleged prohibition on alcoholic intake? Geisler states that "[S]ince good drinking water was not readily available for most people in the first century, purification was necessary."⁹ But this still would involve people consuming alcohol. And Geisler's assertion that it would take over 20 glasses of diluted NT wine to get drunk does not hold up. The average wine is about 12 to 14 per cent alcohol by volume, and can go as high as 15 per cent, according to Land/Duke.¹⁰ If we assume Geisler's three-to-one ratio, and a wine of 14 to 15 per cent alcohol by volume, that *still* produces a diluted beverage of close to 4 per cent alcohol by volume. Equally damning, Geisler admits that the Bible never specifies that wine should follow this 3- to-one ratio.¹¹ Elwell

6 Geisler, "To Drink or Not to Drink," p. 4.

7 See Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," accessed at: <http://www.swartzentover.com/cotor/bible/Doctrines/Holiness/Drugs%20&%20Alcohol/Wine-Drinking%20in%20New%20Testament%20Times.htm>.

8 Walter A. Elwell, "Wine," in Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 2 (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI): 2147.

9 Geisler, "To Drink or Not to Drink," 4

10 Land/Duke, "The Christian and Alcohol," 29.

11 Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 370. His main support for this equation seems to be the Babylonian Talmud, which "asserts that

states that “[a] natural, nondistilled wine could reach as high as 15 percent alcohol content. If watered down 3 parts water to 1 part wine, the alcohol content would be 5 percent and still fairly potent.”¹² This is the strength of today’s typical beer, a Budweiser or a Heineken (“lite” beer, like Miller Lite, is about 4 per cent alcohol by volume, as is most traditional British cask-conditioned ale). Surely it does not take 20 glasses of a 4 or 5 per cent alcohol-by-volume beer to get drunk. And of course, there was no biblical commandment that the mixture had to follow this 3 parts water, one part wine ratio. A ratio that contained less water would, of course, produce a beverage with more alcohol in it. There is no evidence in the Bible that wine was always diluted with the same wine/water ratio, so it is impossible to say how strong the wine was across the centuries of the Biblical record.

Land/Duke would answer by saying that the wine of biblical times was much weaker even before it was diluted: biblical wine, they claim, “was around two to six per cent.”¹³ But these figures seem doubtful. Why would grapes in the ancient world produce a much lower alcohol content than grapes do today? The fermentation process has not changed since mankind discovered wine thousands of years ago. Professor R.A. Baker, commenting on wine strength in the ancient world, states that “the juice of grapes, under natural circumstances, will have an alcoholic content of 10-17%.”¹⁴ An article in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* opts for a slightly lower level of alcohol for wine, stating that the limit is 14 per cent.¹⁵ A publication associated with the prestigious Culinary Institute

Passover wine was three parts water to one part one wine” (362). But there are two problems here. One, the Talmud is referring to Passover wine, not everyday drinking wine. And two, there is no way to know if the Talmud’s 3-to-1 ratio was always followed in New Testament times. But again, all of this is moot, as 3-to-1 wine would still be an intoxicating drink.

12 Elwell, “Wine,” 2147.

13 Ibid, 29.

14 R.A. Baker, “Early Church History: Wine in the Ancient World,” as accessed at <http://churchhistory101.com/wine-alcohol-bible.php>.

15 “Alcoholic Drinks,” R.V. Pierard, in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Baker Books, 1984), 28.

of America lists the average strength of wine as 12 per cent alcohol by volume, with certain wines achieving a level of 14.5.¹⁶ While there is variation in the strength of wine, it seems likely that wines produced in the dry, hot climate of the Middle East would tend toward the more potent side of the equation:

As grapes ripen on the vine, the sugar levels rise in the presence of increased heat and light—in a word, sunshine—during the growing season. At the same time, the heat and humidity levels affect the acidity levels in grapes. In general, hot, dry conditions drive the acid levels down. So, the cooler the climate, the higher the acid levels; the warmer the climate, the higher the sugar levels.... Most importantly, the sugar content of the grapes at harvest will determine the maximum level of alcohol produced during fermentation.¹⁷

Aside from the facts of fermentation science, another problem with the position that wine in biblical times was much weaker than today's versions concerns its purifying qualities. If wine was primarily used for purifying bacteria-laden water, as many who hold the abstinence position believe, it is hard to imagine how Land/Duke's weak wine of only 2 to 6 per cent alcohol by volume could have much of a sterilizing effect, especially if it was being mixed with water, with water making up two thirds to three fourths of the concoction. This is important because the purifying effects of wine on polluted water are often cited by abstinence advocates as one of the few (if not only) benefits and "moral" purposes of wine in biblical times. But I would not trust a beverage with an alcohol level of only one or two percent by volume to save me from harmful parasites in my drinking water.

16 Steve Kaplan, Brian H. Smith, and Michael A. Weiss, *Exploring Wine* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 18.

17 *Ibid.*, 10.

III. CHRIST AND WINE

So even if we accept the position that biblical wine was diluted, Geisler and Land/Duke still have to account for the fact that what was being consumed in biblical times was indeed an intoxicating beverage. Even Land/Duke admit that such diluted wine was strong enough to cause drunkenness if abused.¹⁸ But this is precisely my point; the Bible does not condemn the consumption of alcohol, only its misuse. Either people in biblical times consumed alcohol, or they did not. Either the Bible forbids all use of alcohol, or it does not. Some abstinence Christians have attempted to avoid this dilemma with recourse to the “Biblical-wine-was-not-fermented” argument, but Geisler and Land/Duke deserve credit for rejecting this linguistically and exegetically indefensible position. Yet despite their honesty in admitting that Biblical wine contained alcohol, they still seem to have trouble reconciling their total abstinence position with the obvious examples of wine-drinking in scripture. It is therefore not surprising that neither Geisler nor Land/Duke have much of a rebuttal for Christ’s miracle at Cana in John 2:1-11. Consider Land/Duke’s comments on Christ’s wine-making miracle: “[F]irst, we cannot be positive that what Jesus created had alcoholic content. The headwaiter may have been commenting on how good the wine tasted not its alcoholic content.”¹⁹ This is certainly a case of special pleading, for whenever the Bible speaks of wine, it is speaking of fermented grape juice. Even Geisler himself takes pains to point out that when scriptures speaks of wine, “Welch’s Grape Juice” is never intended.²⁰

Second, the waiter is obviously someone who has had a fair amount of experience as a wine taster. That is clear when he says that the wine Jesus created is the type of special wine that is usually served at the end of the meal, when the guests are too intoxicated to be able to discern poor

18 Land/Duke, “The Christian and Alcohol,” 30.

19 Land and Duke, “The Christian and Alcohol,” 32.

20 Geisler, “To Drink or Not to Dink,” 8.

from high quality wine. It is quite doubtful that the waiter would have given such approval to unfermented grape juice (he would not even have called such a beverage wine, as Geisler has shown). Additionally, neither Geisler nor Land/Duke comment on the fact that the waiter admits that it was customary for guests at a wedding to over-indulge a bit; only after a fairly large amount of low-quality wines had dulled their palates (and their senses) would the guests not be able to tell that they were drinking a "higher end" product. Christ must have known that such over-indulgence sometimes occurred at Jewish weddings, but he never speaks out against it. In fact, he miraculously creates even more wine for the guests to drink. I do not wish to claim that Christ in this passage encouraged drunkenness, but he obviously was not draconian in his attitude toward alcohol. When pondering why Jesus would have performed such a miracle (leaving aside any Johannine theological symbolism inherent in the act), the most likely reason is that he wanted his friends at the wedding feast to enjoy themselves, and celebrate the joyous event with some of the superb wine he had given them.

Third, Land/Duke state that "the text never says that Jesus drank any of this wine."²¹ This is true, but seems a moot point, since the authors admit, just a few sentences earlier, that Jesus did indeed drink on occasion. And whether Jesus drank any of the wedding wine or not, he is responsible for others drinking it, so to condemn wine as sinful is to implicate Christ in causing others to sin. In what can be called a last-ditch effort to put a positive abstinence spin on the events at Cana, Land/Duke quote the following passage in one of their footnotes:

The process of fermentation is one of decay, and it is not probable that it would have been initiated, or its results realized, by the fiat of the Saviour.... To produce pure grape-juice, the unfermented fruit of the vine, would, if possible to man, be a closer imitation of the creative plan of Providence than calling a fermenting substance into existence.... It is against the principle of scriptural and moral analogy to suppose that the Saviour exerted His supernatural energy

21 Land/Duke, "The Christian and Alcohol," 32.

to bring into being a kind of wine which had been condemned by Solomon and the prophets as a ‘mocker’ and ‘defrauder,’and which the Holy Spirit had selected as an emblem of the wrath of the almighty.... [also counting against the idea that the wine was alcoholic is] the fact that the Lord did in moments what normally takes months to achieve—the process of turning water into ‘the pure blood of the grape.’²²

To their credit, Land/Duke do not wholeheartedly endorse these ideas, but nor do they “deny the plausibility of these arguments.”²³ Of course these arguments are plausible; almost any argument can be. The question is, will such arguments convince anyone who does not hold an *a priori* abstinence position. Ironically, this passage, which attempts to preserve Christ as the champion who upholds his Father’s moral standards, actually achieves an unintended effect. It lessens Christ’s miraculous power by suggesting that he could not have created alcoholic wine instantly, since nature herself requires many days to complete the task. If Christ had trouble by-passing nature’s long process for wine-making, it is hard to believe that he could have overcome nature in other miraculous ways, such as healing the lame, walking on water, or raising the dead.

Bowing to the inevitable, Land/Duke address the attempt of Christ’s enemies’ to discredit him by calling him a glutton and a drunkard for his associations with the common folk. They write that Jesus “does seem, however, to indicate that he did not totally abstain from beverages that had any alcohol content.”²⁴ If Christ himself did not abstain completely from alcohol, it is hard to see how the authors can support their abstinence position. Land/Duke attempt to soften the impact of Christ’s drinking by stating that Jesus “doesn’t appear to have engaged in the practice because he felt it was his right to do so. Unfortunately, he doesn’t say why. For his critics it was enough that he socialized with ‘sinners.’ Because of this

22 Frederic Richard Lees and Dawson Burns, *The Temperance Bible-Commentary* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1868), 304-5.

23 Land/Duke, “The Christian and Alcohol,” 33.

24 Land/Duke, “The Christian and Alcohol,” 32.

socializing they attempted to discredit him in the eyes of the people, and he was not apologetic for that."²⁵

The first thing that is odd about this passage is the idea that alcohol is a "right" to be defended. Christian advocates of moderate drinking rarely claim that drinking is a "right." Rather, they claim that it is not sinful, or that it is not forbidden in scripture, which seems to be Christ's position here. He is not even bothered by the fact that he is referred to as a drunkard (although I agree with Land/Duke that Jesus never drank to excess, for this would be sinful behavior, and evangelical Christians are in agreement that Christ did not sin). What bothers Christ is, as Land/Duke rightly point out, is the fact the Christ's enemies use the drunkard slander only as an excuse not to believe in Christ's divine mission.²⁶ The charge of drunkenness is irrelevant for Jesus, for he has, so to speak, bigger theological fish to fry.

Then of course there is the initiation of the Lord's Supper, where Christ not only shares wine with his disciples, but even tells them that he will not again drink wine with them until they drink it together in the Kingdom of the Father. Even if one were to assume that alcohol is a sin God tolerates on earth, it is hard to imagine that it would be permitted in God's kingdom if it is indeed the sin that abstinence advocates believe it to be. And the position that wine was needed in biblical times to purify polluted water will not be applicable in the eschatological kingdom to come, for surely there is no polluted water in the paradise for which Christians eagerly await. Of course, Christ may be speaking metaphorically, his meaning something like, "I will not again share a meal of fellowship with you until the kingdom comes." But it is strange that he would use wine imagery here, if indeed wine is the great evil that its critics contend it is. And if Christ did not use wine at the Last Supper, and the earliest Christian churches did not use it in their services, then where did the tradition of using wine in the Eucharistic celebration originate?

Walter Elwell's comments on this matter are worth noting. "Evidence

25 Ibid., 32.

26 Ibid., 32.

strongly suggests that the wine used at the Lord’s Supper was a mixture of water and wine, probably three to one in agreement with the dictates of the Mishna. The phrase “fruit of the vine” (Mt 26:27—29) is often interpreted to mean fresh grape juice. However, fresh grape juice would be all but impossible to find.”²⁷ This is because it “is improbable that with the means at their disposal the Jews could have done so [preserved grape juice in an unfermented state] even had they so desired. Unfermented wine was not known in that ancient time.”²⁸

IV. WINE AND CHRISTIANITY

I think it is true that even if one can find approval in scripture for drinking in moderation, this does not mean that Christians should *necessarily* drink. Land/Duke are on solid ground, I think, when they explain that a non-drinking Christian will have a better chance of success when trying to evangelize someone who has himself struggled with alcohol, or who has had a family member harmed in some way by drinking. However, I think the authors press the point a bit too far when they write that

[w]hile some have argued that they find greater acceptance among a certain subset of the population because they drink with them, this is not the case for the vast majority of people who need to be reached with the Gospel. In fact, many lost people have certain expectations of Christians, and one is that they do not drink. Many of the lost recognize this as a distinguishing feature between Christians who are serious about their faith and those outside the faith.²⁹

First, the authors do not cite evidence or statistics for the claim that the “vast majority” of the lost would be more receptive to non-drinking Christians. How do they know this is the case? Certainly this would hold true in

27 Elwell, “Wine,” 2148.

28 Hastings, “Wine and Strong Drink,” 1039.

29 Land/Duke, “The Christian and Alcohol,” 34.

some Muslim countries, where alcohol is forbidden by Islamic teaching (although evangelization in most of them is illegal or often so difficult as to prove largely ineffective). But in the United States, and in Europe, where non-Christians are accustomed to an alcohol-infused culture, why would the vast majority be more receptive to the Christian message if it comes with the message of total abstinence? I doubt that many non-Christians are even aware that some Protestants uphold the abstinence position, for two reasons. One, they may know Roman Catholics, for whom drinking is not the debated issue it is in fundamentalist Protestant circles. And two, even most non-Christians know that Christianity uses wine in its central sacrament, the Eucharist, so why would they expect Christians to have a rabidly anti-alcohol attitude?

Additionally, few non-Christians consider drinking to be sinful, so it is highly doubtful that such a person would be impressed by a Christian who avoids what is not deemed sinful in the first place. Most non-Christians would be about as impressed with a Christian's avoidance of alcohol as he or she would be by a Muslim's eschewal of pork, another practice that no secular person considers to be morally wrong (unless of course he is a card-carrying member of PETA). Also, it must be realized that many non-Christians in the West object to Christianity precisely because they perceive it as legalistic, dull, and out of date, and a religion that demands total abstinence will be rejected out of hand by many who will find this requirement to be puritanical. Perhaps St. Paul's approach is needed here. The Christian witness must attempt to be all things to all men. If trying to convert one whose life has been adversely affected by alcohol, the Christian could cite all the biblical prohibitions against drunkenness. If the Christian's unsaved friend is a drinker, the Christian may find an opening for his message by sharing a beer or two with the friend over a football game. But in the end, what will impress non-Christians about Christian behavior in the modern world are those same things that impressed pagans about Christians when the faith first appeared in the ancient world: their living, authentic examples of love, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice.

V. WHY THE DEBATE OVER ALCOHOL AMONG NORTH AMERICAN EVANGELICALS?

For those outside of the North American context, the battle within the evangelical Christian movement over the abstinence vs. moderation position can be hard to understand. After all, European Christianity has never had a comparable debate over the nature of consuming alcohol. Other than Iceland from 1915-1921, no European country experienced anything like the “noble experiment” of Prohibition. Prohibition was, of course, the popular name for the Volstead Act, the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution that forbade the production, sale (and by implication) the consumption of alcohol. It was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1919, and not repealed by Congress until 1933.

Now, Prohibition is generally credited as a failure by most Americans, be they laypersons or professional historians. Those who wanted to drink still did, but they had to buy their potables from criminals, rather than from government-authorized sellers. This had the dual effect of destroying the tax revenues the government could obtain from the sale of alcoholic beverages, and it also enabled small-time criminal gangs to make the huge sums of money needed to morph into potent organized crime families. And let’s not forget the thousands upon thousands who lost their jobs in taverns, breweries, and distilleries with the onset of Prohibition. Regarding the illegal money made by gangsters during Prohibition, a similar situation exists today with the drug cartels of Central and South America, which have grown fabulously wealthy and powerful from the illegal drug trade.³⁰

30 What happened with alcohol during Prohibition is now being revisited in the marijuana legalization debate in the United States. Two states, Colorado and Washington State, have already fully legalized the drug, and several more, mainly Western states, are expected to follow. In addition, many states have legalized so-called medical marijuana, which allows physicians to give patients prescriptions to obtain the drug in state-sanctioned stores for a variety of medical conditions, often ones involving chronic pain.

But despite the consensus about the Volstead Act, there are Christians in the United States who look back upon Prohibition fondly. For instance, Sara F. Ward is a member of the anti-alcohol Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The group had its heyday in the period leading up to Prohibition, but still exists today. She does not advocate a return to Prohibition, for she writes "[i]n today's society, with the emphasis on personal liberty, it is not conceivable that alcohol would be prohibited nationwide."³¹ But she goes on to cite favorably the numerous health benefits that resulted from Prohibition, including: large decreases in domestic violence, assault, and various health-related issues.³² But I suspect one could challenge the statistics she cites in her article. It is easy to imagine that alcohol-related problems did decrease during the first few years of Prohibition, but those numbers must have eventually increased, for three reasons. One, during Prohibition, women began to visit so-called "speakeasies" (the name derived from the fact that one had to "speak" a password to gain entrance) where hard liquor, much more so than beer,³³ was sold. This was ironic because one of the strongest arguments in the prohibitionists' arsenal was that husbands were squandering all their money in the saloons, leaving their families neglected. Ward herself states that "protection of the home" is the motto for her organization.³⁴ But prohibition had all but wiped out the drinking saloon, once the exclusive domain of men, and in the more lax atmosphere of the Roaring 1920's, women were drinking far more than ever before because they were accompanying men to speakeasies.³⁵

The second reason is, once alcohol became illegal, Americans were hard-pressed to drink in a leisurely fashion. Prohibition "was

31 Sara F. Ward, "Woman's Christian Temperance Union", *Criswell Theological Review* 5/2 (Spring 2008), 60.

32 *Ibid.*, 60-61. Her source for her information is E. Deets Pickett, *Truth About Prohibition: Then and Now* (Columbus, OH: School and College Press, 1963).

33 This was ironic because beer, as well as hard (fermented) cider were often advocated in early America as weaker alternatives to potent spirits.

34 Ward, "Woman's Christian Temperance Union," 53.

35 Jack S. Blocker, Jr., "Did Prohibition Really Work?" Accessed at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470475/>.

counterproductive because it encouraged the heavy and rapid consumption of alcohol in secretive, nonsocially regulated and controlled ways [i.e., the speakeasy].” One did not go to a speakeasy for one or two drinks; the purpose of the visit was to get drunk.³⁶

The third reason to doubt that Americans became bastions of physical health during Prohibition is that so much of the illegally made alcohol often contained impurities that were dangerous, indeed fatal, for human consumption. 1927 saw twelve thousand people die because of such bootleg liquor, while in 1930 some fifteen thousand persons developed “jake foot,” a type of paralysis caused by drinking bootleg booze.”³⁷

But even if Ward’s health figures cannot be contradicted, this in no way proves that the Bible forbids the use of alcohol, even though Christianity and the Bible were *the* basis of the Prohibition movement as far as American Evangelicals were concerned. Ward tries, but she falls into the fermented vs. unfermented wine argument (i.e., that when the Bible talks of wine, it is only referring to “new,” or unfermented wine). This argument was often used by alcohol abolitionists before the advent of Prohibition to prove that the Bible never talks of “real,” fermented wine.³⁸ The problem with the argument is that, even at the time of the American Civil War (and by implication in biblical times), “scientific knowledge did not yet exist to prevent grapes from fermenting if crushed and converted into juice.” It took Thomas Welch, a committed prohibitionist, to devise a fairly elaborate system whereby he could create non-alcoholic wine which he called “Dr. Welch’s Unfermented Grape Juice,” and which we know today simply as Welch’s grape juice.³⁹

America has always been very much a populist country, and scholarly

36 David J. Hanson, “National Prohibition of Alcohol in the U.S.” Accessed at: http://www2.potsdam.edu/alcohol/Controversies/1091124904.html#UwAoy_ldWn8, p. 6.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

38 Ward, “Women’s Christian Temperance Union,” 68-69. Her analysis of Hebrew and Greek words makes no reference to recognized scholars of those languages. Indeed, even noted evangelical scholar and abstinence advocate Norman Geisler, as noted above, admits that the word “wine” in the Bible always means fermented wine.

39 Andrew Barr, *Drink: A Social History of America* (NY: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1999), 362.

theology often took a back seat to emotional presentation by American preachers. In fact, revival-style preachers were instrumental in the spread of Christianity westward, away from the population centers of the East Coast. "In the rough-hewn frontier society, drunkenness often seemed more the norm than the exception, and concerns about intoxication became one of numerous issues that prompted a growing number of clergy to learn that without appropriate evangelization the frontier would succumb to barbarism."⁴⁰ Drinking saloons in the Western part of the U.S. were often lawless establishments in lawless territories. Such saloons have acquired a stereotypical reputation because of their portrayal in American western movies, but they were indeed places where drinking, violence, and prostitution often flourished. Thus American taverns in the West were "dens of iniquity" in ways that pubs in crowded, well-regulated European towns usually were not, at least not in recent centuries. This in part explains why temperance groups grew in the U.S. but not in Europe. In the U.S., the saloon was often a place where greater sins than drunkenness occurred. If violence and sexual debauchery, things most Christians agreed were morally wrong, occurred in liquor houses, it stood to reason that liquor itself was equally evil, or at least that it led to these grave sins. Thus, "the nineteenth-century revivals and temperance crusades represented an early ecumenical movement that brought together a variety of Protestant groups... Evangelical revivalists made abstinence a sign of true conversion, insisting that alcohol inhibited the world of the Spirit in the life of the believer."⁴¹ In fact, the age-old question for Christians, how do we know if another person is saved? was often answered by frontier preachers who "could only look at a man's behavior for some visible proof of conversion. One such proof was abstinence from alcoholic drinks."⁴²

Also, in America in the mid-1800s, most American Evangelicals

40 Leonard, "They Have No Wine," 9.

41 Ibid., 10.

42 Barr, *Drink*, 358.

awaited the return of Christ with a post-millennial⁴³ understanding of that event. That is, Jesus would come back after Christians had thoroughly Christianized the globe and made it fit for His coming. Among the things that must vanish before his coming were slavery and the drinking of alcohol.⁴⁴ All of this is quite important for understanding how the way was paved toward Prohibition, for such Evangelical movements as described above were not fringe movements with little influence. George Marsden writes that “the revivalists’ emphases on simple Bible preaching in a fervent style that would elicit dramatic conversion experiences set the standards for much of American Protestantism. Since Protestantism was by far the dominant religion in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century, evangelicalism shaped the most characteristic style of American religion.”⁴⁵ A good example of such preaching is the famed evangelist Billy Sunday, best-remembered today for his so-called “Booze Sermon.” In it he rails against the evils of drink in a sometimes impassioned, sometimes folksy, sometimes humorous manner. The sermon does indeed make a strong case that alcohol is destructive, but his arguments are social, not biblical or theological. When he does venture into theological territory, his claim that not only those who drink alcohol, but those who sell it to them will be damned to hell, it reveals just how strongly Sunday and others like him felt about alcohol, even if scriptural teaching was not always on their side.⁴⁶

43 The other two views of the Second Coming Are the Post-Millennial, and the A-Millennial. In the former, it is Christ who must cleanse the earth of wickedness before establishing his 1000-year reign on the planet. This view is the most popular of the three with the majority of today’s American fundamentalists. The later view teaches that there will be no millennial kingdom, and that the 1000-year reign of Christ is probably best taken symbolically.

44 Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. See, 1998), 18.

45 George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 2.

46 William “Billy” Sunday, “The Famous ‘Booze’ Sermon,” *Criswell Theological Review* 5/2 (spring 2008), 90. Sunday seems to base his thinking here on Paul’s admonitions in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, which states drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God. But of course most people who drink are not drunkards, and Paul does not hold sellers of alcohol responsible for those who abuse it.

Aside from the rough-and-tumble nature of nineteenth-century American drinking establishments, there was another element to the growing American Christian aversion to alcohol, and that can be traced to anti-immigrant sentiment. Even so liberal an American theologian as Walter Rauschenbusch could write in 1907 that “the increase in drinking was...related to foreign influence.”⁴⁷ He saw drinking not so much as sinful in the biblical sense, but as morally and physically destructive to the gospel-based social utopia he and others were trying to create. But his demonization of alcohol is a bit odd, not only because of his reputation for fathering the liberal “social gospel” movement (which saw its primary duties as the eradication of poverty, the improvement of labor unions, etc.) in the United States, but because he was of German stock himself. This is significant because most of America’s large brewers, headquartered in the Midwest, were started by German brewers. German names like Miller, Pabst, Schiltz and Schaffer dominated the American beer scene for much of the 20th century, until the rise of Budweiser relegated them to second-rate status in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the popularity of beer on American college campuses today, it was prophetic when Rauschenbusch spoke of the growing popularity of beer on university campuses as the introduction of “a foreign custom into American life.”⁴⁸

With the advent of World War 1, which started just five years before the Volstead Act was enacted, Americans felt they had strong reasons to despise the Germans. In addition to their gluttonous drinking habits, they seemed to be the aggressors in a war of which most Americans wanted no part, but feared they would be pulled into just the same. Many German immigrants from the mid 1800’s onward had come from southern Germany, the Roman Catholic part of that country, and did not share the puritanical views of many Americans on drinking. One complaint lodged against them was not so much that they drank, but that their drinking did not permit them to sufficiently honor the Sabbath: “they [Germans] go to

47 Leonard, “They Have No Wine,” 12.

48 Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* ed. Robert D. Cross (NY: Harper and Row, 1964), 376.

church at the Beer [sic] shop and go home drunk at night.”⁴⁹

Aside from questions of personal piety, there was an organization in the early 1900’s called the German-American Alliance. It made two mistakes. One, it supported Germany in the early years of World War I.⁵⁰ And two, as stated above, one of the most visible signs of the large German presence in America was the large lager breweries (German lager beer having replaced English-style ale as America’s beer of choice), almost all of them founded by Germans with obviously German-sounding names. “As popular denunciation of ‘the Hun’ grew shriller with American entry into the war, the brewers’ missteps allowed hyper patriots to condemn” major brewers like Pabst and Schlitz as traitorous enemies of the united States.⁵¹ Thus, “in the superheated atmosphere of wartime, brewers and their saloons were transformed from metaphorical into literal enemies of the republic.”⁵²

Before and after the turn of the 20th century, large numbers of Irish immigrants made their way to American shores. Again, there was a double reason that American evangelicals were distrustful of them. First, they were Roman Catholics, and Protestant America often lumped them together with African Americans, so great was their disdain for them. Also, they had the reputation of being heavy drinkers. “The great majority of Irish immigrants were young, penniless, male refugees from famine. Driven by familiar customs, their straitened circumstances in America, they drank whiskey, often to excess, in ‘bachelor groups.’”⁵³ This heavy drinking only exacerbated what established Americans already hated the Irish for, namely their “poverty and Catholicism.”⁵⁴

But it was not just the Irish; Catholics at that time were coming to America from various parts of Europe. Because Protestant parts of Europe

49 Ibid., 33.

50 Ibid., 144.

51 Ibid., 145.

52 Ibid., 145.

53 Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*, 33.

54 Ibid., 33.

never had experienced anything like mass immigration of mostly Roman Catholics from Southern and Eastern Europe around the turn of the century, there was never a comparable backlash as there was in the U.S. These Catholics “insisted on practicing what many Protestants regarded as an un-American style of worship, full of reverence and ritual. By rejecting the use of wine in the Eucharist⁵⁵, and by ceasing to drink wine with their meals, native-born American Protestants demonstrated their disapproval of Catholic immigrants and their old-country practices.”⁵⁶ Even after Prohibition was repealed, many counties in the South remained “dry,” for these counties were almost entirely Protestant, and could not shake off the association of alcohol, especially wine, with despised Roman Catholicism.⁵⁷

Protestant prohibitionists are forcing a view of alcohol onto the biblical data that would have been utterly foreign to those living in biblical times. And it is not just those who lived in Bible times who would not have understood the total abstinence position. If the Bible so clearly teaches that all drinking is a sin, then why was this fact not noticed by the great Protestant thinkers of the past? Martin Luther apparently had no reservations about drinking beer (good German that he was), or wine for that matter. Writing to a friend about his impending wedding, Luther wrote: “I am to be married on Thursday. My lord Katie [his wife] and I invite you to send a barrel of the best Torgau beer, and if it is not good, you will have to drink it all yourself.” In another, later letter to his wife, he complains that he misses the comforts of home, and says, “I keep thinking what good wine and beer I have at home.”⁵⁸ And that other great reformer, John Calvin, in typical French fashion, enjoyed his wine. Writing in his

55 Today in many of the conservative Protestant churches I have attended, grape juice, not wine, is used for communion. This is partly due to the old wine/Catholicism connection, perhaps, but there is also a more practical reason for it. For those in the congregation who are recovered alcoholics, grape juice is certainly a means of erring on the side of caution.

56 Barr, *Drink*, 363.

57 *Ibid.*, 363.

58 Quoted in Jim West, *Drinking With Calvin and Luther!* (Oakdown: Lincoln, CA, 2003), 28, 29.

Institutes of the Christian Religion, he says “[w]e are nowhere forbidden to laugh, or to be satisfied with food . . . or to be delighted with music, or to drink wine.”⁵⁹

Lest anyone think that Christian drinking was purely a European phenomenon, we need only consider the Puritans who settled New England. “Those who came to the American colonies . . . generally accepted the Puritan norms for the use of alcoholic beverages. While seventeenth-century New England Puritans cautioned against drunkenness, and disciplined church members accordingly, they did not eschew the use of spirits all together.”⁶⁰ It is hard to imagine, that Luther, Calvin, and the Puritans, diligent students of scripture that they were, would have consumed alcohol if the Bible truly forbids it. Those who claim the moral high ground in the debate must not only claim a greater personal holiness than such luminaries as Luther and Calvin, but must also explain why these brilliant expositors of scripture found nothing in the Bible forbidding the consumption of alcohol.

Now, these great thinkers were not sinless, a prohibitionist might claim, so their sinful indulgence in alcohol should not surprise us. But surely they would have been aware of the many places in the Bible where total abstinence is allegedly taught? And if so, why would they habitually break the clear teachings of scripture, while attempting so strenuously to live by all its other dictates? The reason is simple: “[n]either Judaism nor Christianity requires abstinence, unlike Buddhism and Islam.”⁶¹ Most Christians would view Islam as a religion based upon works-righteousness; one must follow the rules of Islam in order to earn salvation. Things like avoiding alcohol and pork are part of the required works to please God and secure a place in heaven. But it is precisely this kind of legalism that Christianity, especially in its Protestant form, is against. Christians are saved through grace, not through the avoidance of

59 Ibid., 53.

60 Bill J. Leonard, “They Have no Wine: Wet/Dry Baptists and the Alcohol Issues,” *Criswell Theological Review*, 5/2 (Spring 2008), 8.

61 Pierard, “Alcoholic Drinks,” 28.

certain foods and drinks.

The modern American Protestant fundamentalist eschewal of all alcohol is precisely that, a modern position that simply is not reflected in the history of the Church world-wide. Today's non-drinking American fundamentalist Protestants have a weak pedigree, tracing their position back as far as only the anti-alcohol trends of the 1800's, largely fueled by women's Christian temperance groups in the 19th century, the emotionalist appeal of American preachers, anti-Catholic resentment, and anti-German sentiment during the first World War. Ultimately, all this culminated in the social disaster known as Prohibition. This is not to say that there had not been anti-alcohol movements in the Christian community prior to the 1800's. There were, but they were not widespread or of long-lasting importance. The Methodist movement that began in the 1700's "was one of the first to take a strong stand for complete abstinence."⁶² Prior to that, a few religious medieval orders eschewed alcohol, and in the 1500's some temperance societies did indeed appear.⁶³ There were government efforts to combat the abuse of inexpensive gin in England, especially in London, in the 1700's. But the government's goal was to stop abuse, not to outlaw alcohol completely.⁶⁴

VI. CRACKS IN AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM'S ABSTINENCE ARMOR?

Despite all that has been said so far about the phenomenon of North American Evangelicals eschewing alcohol, there are signs that this position is changing. For instance, in 2013, The Moody Bible Institute,

62 R. Alan Streett, "Christians and Alcohol," *Criswell Theological Review*, volume 5/ 2 (2008), 1.

63 R. V. Pierard, "Alcohol," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Walter A. Elwell. (Grand Rapids:, Baker Book House 1984), 28.

64 Ernest L. Abel, "The Gin epidemic: Much Ado About What?" As accessed at: <http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/content/36/5/401.full>.

an evangelical/fundamentalist Bible college in Chicago, “dropped its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption,” while still insisting that employees must follow prohibitions which can be considered “biblical absolutes” (presumably thing like sex outside of marriage, which the New Testament clearly teaches against).⁶⁵ The implication here being that the Bible does not clearly forbid drinking, the way it does things like adultery or lying. Two years before that, America’s most prestigious evangelical institute of higher learning, Wheaton College, also lifted the ban on alcohol for faculty, staff, and graduate students (a moot point for undergraduates, who are for the most part under the age of 21, the legal drinking age in the United States). However, the lifting of the ban only applies to the off-campus lives of those at Wheaton; alcohol on school grounds is still not allowed.⁶⁶

Why these changes? Partly because these schools want to achieve “cultural acceptance,” not just within the non-Christian segments of society, but within the evangelical community itself, where a 2010 survey revealed that 40 per cent of evangelical leaders consume alcohol in moderation.⁶⁷ Even among America’s Baptists, who are among the nation’s most theologically conservative Christians, especially on the abstinence issue, there are rumblings of discontent regarding the total ban on drinking. The fact that in 2007, The Florida Baptist Convention had to re-affirm its opposition to alcohol “suggests that there is widespread difference of opinion, even among those who affirm the confession of faith, biblical inerrancy and other dogmas widely accepted by the Convention and its member churches.”⁶⁸ One year earlier, even the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Baptist denomination in the United States, was forced to re-affirm its complete opposition to even

65 Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Moody Bible Institute Drops Alcohol and Tobacco Ban for Employees,” accessed at: <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2013/9/25/moody-bible-institute-drops-alcohol-and-tobacco-ba/>, 1.

66 *Ibid.*, 1.

67 *Ibid.*, 1.

68 Leonard, “They Have No Wine,” 4.

moderate drinking.⁶⁹ Obviously, this would not have been necessary had there been no dissention within the ranks. This is not to say that Baptists are on their way to eventually embracing alcohol to a man, for “the abstinence emphasis is so strong and so deep in certain Baptist traditions, often because of personal or family problems with excessive alcohol, that many will never entertain another option.” Still, many Baptists are reconsidering the alcohol issue, as they “realize that the moderate use of alcohol is practiced by many conservative believers without being a litmus test of personal morality or orthodox theology.”⁷⁰

VII. CONCLUSION

To claim that the Old and New Testaments forbid all drinking simply is not the case. Wine was consumed in both Testaments, be it full-strength wine or a still somewhat potent mixture of wine and water. Jesus himself drank wine, and he created wine at the wedding feast in Cana for others to enjoy. And the majority of Christian people down through the ages were not advocates of abstinence. Since these arguments on behalf of moderate drinking cannot be refuted, it seems pointless to insist on the abstinence position, especially when the Bible clearly distinguishes between the moderate, and immoderate, use of alcohol. In the end, it must be admitted that drinking is not forbidden by either scripture, Church history, or majority Christian practice.

Still, Alcohol *abuse* is obviously dangerous. Common sense, medical evidence, as well as the Bible, all warn against it. Thus the positions of Norman Geisler, Richard Land, and Barrett Duke perhaps need to be refocused so that they do not condemn alcohol as a forbidden substance

69 Thomas S. Kidd, “How Evangelicals Lost Their Way on Alcohol,” as accessed at: <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/How-Evangelicals-Lost-Their-Way-on-Alcohol-Thomas-S-Kidd-01-12-2011.html>, 1.

70 Leonard, “They Have No Wine,” 17.

for Christians, but rather one that can, if misused, wreak havoc in Christians' lives. Alcohol, like so many things, can become sinful when abused. The same can be said for food, sex, or the Internet. Perhaps conservative Christian scholars who are vehemently anti-alcohol should join with scholars who advocate for moderation. They could perhaps put forth for further study questions like the following for consideration by American evangelicals. One, should alcohol use be discouraged (but never prohibited) among evangelicals, since a small minority of those who begin using it do indeed become alcoholics? This may be a laudable goal, since the negative effects of alcohol probably outweigh any benefits. Two, what should be the attitude of the churches toward those who have alcohol addictions? Should evangelical churches be more welcoming to those with such problems? Three, should churches pay more attention to those who have been victims of alcoholics (wives battered by alcoholic husbands, for instance)? Four, is alcohol abuse genetic? Should it be considered a physiological problem, as many medical professionals view it, rather than a "sin" issue? Many U.S. churches have of course been addressing all these issues in various ways for years. Still, once American evangelicals admit that alcohol is not sinful in and of itself, they will be able to focus more energy on those whose lives have been harmed by alcohol, without demonizing the majority of Christian drinkers for whom alcohol causes no physical or spiritual problems.

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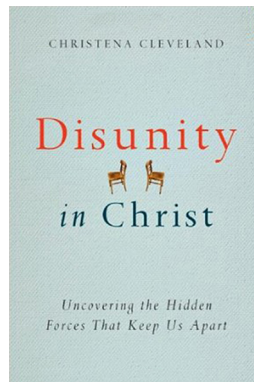
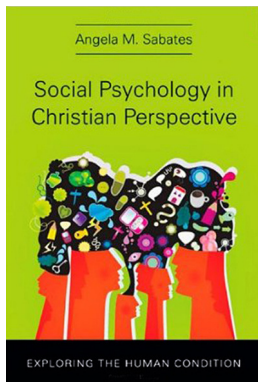


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Review Article

Social Psychology for Theological Education and Christian Unity

Timothy Lim T. N.



KEYWORDS:

| Interdisciplinarity | Social Psychology | Theological Education |
| Christian Unity | Ecumenism |

Angela M. Sabates. *Social Psychology in Christian Perspective. Exploring the Human Condition*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012. HB, 567 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-3998-9. USD.

Christena Cleveland. *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2013. Pbk. 220 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-4403-6. USD.

For decades, theological educators such as David Kesley, Edward Farley, Robert Bank, Robert Ferris, and more recently, Carnegie S. Calian and LeRoy Ford, have joined the ranks to urge the re-envisioning of seminary education. In North America, seminaries accredited with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) have implemented steps to become multicultural.¹ Globally, theological education trends show sensitivity to local and international perspectives,² and reconciliation in missions has also been observed.³ In some quarters, theological education has sought to become ecumenically more inclusive of different Christian traditions.⁴ Some even engage in inter-religious ecumenical learning.⁵ Pedagogically, research on teaching and its practice continue to inform theological educators.⁶ In Europe, Protestant education continues to undergo reconstruction to engage its religious diversity.⁷ Methodologically and in substantive content, theological curriculum (in biblical, theological, historical, pastoral, educational, and missiological studies) has also expanded interdisciplinarily. We live in unprecedented times, with ever-

1 E.g., David Esterline and Ogbu Kalu, *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); Jessica Davis, *Diversity Strategic Planning Report: An Environment Scan of U.S. Theological Schools* (Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C.: Faith and Public Policy Institute, 2014).

2 Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, and Joshva Raja, eds., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

3 Robert Schreiter and Knud Jorgensen, *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* (Regnum Books International, 2013).

4 E.g., Peter Schreiner, Esther Banew, and Simon Oxley, eds., *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context* (Germany: Waxman Verlag, GmbH, 2005); Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Dietrich Werner, Thomas FitzGerald, eds., *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education* (Regnum Books International, 2014).

5 Gert Ruppell, and Peter Schreiner, eds., *Shared Learning in a Plural World: Ecumenical Approaches to Interreligious Education* (Lit Verlag, 2003).

6 E.g., journals, *Teaching Theology and Religion by Wabash Center*, and *Christian Scholar's Review* by Council of Christian Colleges & Universities.

7 Hans-Gunter Heimbrock, Christoph Th. Scheilke, and Peter Schreiner, eds., *Towards Religious Competence: Diversity as a Challenge for Education in Europe* (Lit Verlag, 2001); Peter Schreiner, Gaynor Pollard, and Sturla Sagberg, eds., *Religious Education and Christian Theologies: Some European Perspectives* (Germany: Waxman Verlag, GmbH, 2006); Peter Schreiner, *Religion im Kontext einer Europäisierung von Bildung* (Germany: Waxman Verlag, GmbH, 2012).

expanding horizons to equip churches in the service and mission of the gospel.

Theological educators and learners continue to be guided by a belief that holding the right truth-claim(s) will transform thinking, beliefs, and behavior. As Evangelicals, we would affirm Truth's fundamental role in shaping doctrines, morals, and practices.⁸ Still, Evangelicals would also promote the triadic conception of orthodoxy (right beliefs and worship), orthopraxy (right action or application of beliefs), and orthopathy (right passion or values) as a model for wholistic Christian nurture, and rightly so too.⁹ However, for some Evangelicals, orthodoxy sits at the apex of the triangulated theological model of transformation.¹⁰ Yet, God freely effectuates Christian nurture and transformation by inverting the triadic model. In the aftermath of revival movements, i.e., after encountering God's spontaneous and dramatic acts in the affective life of believers and in church practices, cognitively expressed doctrines undergo revision so as to better articulate an understanding of God and His ways.¹¹ The process only reveals how finitude affects human life and our quest for deeper knowledge of God in the religious quest.¹² The process also clarifies that doctrinal truth-claims, as fundamental as these are, remain incomplete explication of Truth, because ultimately, only God alone has the complete comprehension of Truth (because He is the Great, I AM). What I have

8 E.g., Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and the Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

9 E.g., Paul R. Stevens, *Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 254; Henry K. Knight III, *Is There a Future for God's Love: An Evangelical Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 2012), 3-34; Noel B. Woodbridge, "Living Theologically – Towards a Theology of Christian Practice in Terms of the Theological Triad of Orthodoxy, Orthopathy, and Orthopathy as Portrayed in Isa 6:1-8: A Narrative Approach," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66.2(2010): 1-6.

10 Henry K. Knight III, *A Future for Truth: Evangelical Theology in a Postmodern World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1997).

11 Steven Lands, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994). In retrospect, some of Jonathan Edwards' writings reassessed and reformulated the then existing doctrinal conceptions of God, truth, beliefs, and practices in light of the renewal movements in Northampton.

12 Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Finitude and Theological Anthropology: An Interdisciplinary Exploration into Theological Dimensions of Finitude* (Louvain: Peteers, 2011).

explained so far does not repudiate Evangelicalism's fundamental scriptural axiom (John 8:32; 14:6): it merely reminds that Truth lies more profoundly than our finitude can ever comprehend. Thus, the classical distinction between archetypal and ectypal types of theology keeps finite beings humble: God sovereignly reveals and conceals. In as much as it is necessary for humanity's salvation, God has revealed. However, Abba is not obliged to illuminate all truths, even Truth, exhaustively to us. He did, however, make clear that He alone, in the Incarnate Christ, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The knowledge of God known only to God, concealed from humanity, belongs only to God (archetypal theology) whilst the knowledge revealed to man (ectypal theology) is a gift, albeit that we will continue to grow in comprehension even of ectypal truth, and of truth concerning God's creation.

If readers could accept my statements of the need for broadening theological education's scope to better formulate truth-claims and comprehend the Truth, then, you would want to read the two books am reviewing. This short article explains, via my review of the two books, why theological education should include the subject, social psychology, in its revised curriculum. Seminary prepares ministerial candidates to be change agents for God in church and society. Change agents attend, not only to the interpretation and proclamation of revealed truth, but also to non-theological factors that influence beliefs and practices, so as to steer the churches' present state to their desired stage. It is here that social psychological insights could complement the Christian leadership's quest to be God's instrument, along with the necessary theological roles of interpreting, formulating, and retelling biblical truth. It is also here that the two volumes provide resources to deepen a Christian perspective of creation, redemption, and the witness and mission of the Church, albeit with insights outside of theological loci *per se* (especially for the first book under review).

The subject of both books under review is social psychology. The discipline seeks to understand human behavior and should not only interest

colleagues in psychology but also those seeking ministerial vocations. Human behavior is integral to Christian formation, witness, and mission. Furthermore, it is in human attitude and behavior that education realizes its transformative goals of orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy. In part, this is because Christians grow or experience stagnation in cooperation with the intersubjectivity dynamics of individual, intra-individual, interpersonal, intra-groups, and intergroup developments. Furthermore, human interaction and development are also subjected to the interplay of social/group conformity, attitudes, stereotypes, aggression, pro-sociality, friendship, and relations of attractions (with a significant other) in the human life and developmental cycle: these multi-variant dimensions of life impact and continually shape our beliefs, convictions, affectivity, practice, and experience of God. Here, we locate the contributions of both Angela Sebates and Christena Cleveland, who, though they write about social psychology for a broad Christian audience, it is also clear that their goals, orientations, presuppositions, and depth of contents treatment differ from one another. I must immediately add a caveat here: though social psychology has been typically assumed to stand in the trajectory of the secular-humanist foundation of the social sciences, there are alternatives to this approach. Both the authors provide Christian perspectives, albeit that some similarities and differences exist between their work. I say this to nullify any assumption that both authors published their works as secular social scientists. Deliberate attempts to approach their discipline from Christian perspectives are evident, though I would not be surprised that secular scientists may find some of their Christian presuppositions and approaches unconvincing. For instance, while both authors do not come across as natural-selectionists, the field of social psychology has been dominated by natural-selection presuppositions that may be turned on their head. It is however not my focus in this review article to run with a tangential argument.

Angela Sebates teaches as an associate professor of psychology at Bethel University, St. Paul, Minnesota. Chiefly, she proposes a theistic

reading of social psychology, with a theological confluence of creation, fall, and redemption, to contravene the typical non-theistic evolutionary perspective in social psychology. The book is suited as a high school to college level textbook on social psychology from a Christian perspective, although her treatment of backgrounds in case studies and reported findings are much less informative than a typical college-level social psychology text.¹³ And because she writes for a more advanced-general Christian readership that could handle more sophisticated concepts and learning in the broader field of social psychology for their own development (though not as professional social psychologists), Sebates has made an important contribution. Even though she does not target her work as a complement to theological education, her decision to publish with InterVarsity Academic Press already indicates her desire to reach a critical Christian audience, which would include theological educators and seminarians. In this volume, she successfully introduces, collates, and summarizes important analyses in social psychological themes, case studies, and findings, even as far back as empirical study results from the earlier part of the twentieth century. She claims that the field has advanced research and discoveries of more than seventy-five years. It resonates with historiographies on the development of social psychology, especially after post world wars.¹⁴ However, she does not make sufficient connections with the development of sociality from the eighteenth century Europe to the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (London) which preceded contemporary advances.¹⁵

Sebates' treatment has provided a clear path for connecting this supposedly secular field of empirical research and learning in domains of social psychology with Christian reflection, using the threefold theological

13 Compare with textbooks by Roy F. Baumeister and Brad J. Bushman, *Social Psychology and Human Nature, Comprehensive Edition* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), or Susan Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology* (New York: Wiley and Wiley, 2014).

14 Arie W. Kruglanski and Wolfgang Stroebe, eds., *Handbook of the History of Social Psychology* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011).

15 Gustav Jahoda, *A History of Social Psychology: From Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

motif of creation, fall, and redemption. In the ten chapters, the volume includes methods and assumptions of social psychology, Christianity and social psychology, the self in the social, understanding others in social perception and social cognition processes, social influence (through group conformity, attitudes, and persuasions), antisocial behaviors (aggression, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination), prosocial helping behavior, and interpersonal attraction and relationships. The materials contain rich resources on the power and processes of individual and group influence for prosocial and anti-social convictions and actions. For a field of studies that has largely been scattered and non-unitive (i.e., without an overarching framework that other social psychologists would agree or adhere to) Sebates has done a good job in bringing these insights in a coherent way. Her threefold theological engagement of creation, fall, and redemption, with themes in social psychology in each chapter is one primary reason why she has effectively brought some of the sub-fields of social psychology together in her volume. And though she appears to have given secondary roles to dominant theories like social identity theory, she has managed to reorganize the body of social psychological findings to suit her purposes. Thus, some degree of repetition, e.g., ingroup-outgroup dynamics, social categorization, etc., is to be expected. She did manage to minimize these repetitions and highlight their various contributions to her organizing structure. Each of her three chapters – “social influence,” “attitudes and persuasion,” and “prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination” – could have been brought to a sharper focus if she discussed them as intragroup and intergroup processes. But for a work that is slightly more than 550 pages, Sebates has condensed pertinent literature in her field with some depth and breadth of discussion for her purpose and readership. There are 18 pages on glossary of terms, and 72 pages of bibliography.

Compared with Sebates' volume, Christena Cleveland who teaches at St. Catherine University obviously writes for a less sophisticated audience. In ten short, readable chapters, Cleveland gathers social psychological insights to explain a specific issue: the unseen dynamics

as to why churches remain in disunity. Combined with personal biographical narratives, Cleveland easily brings core technical concepts with lively examples, humor, and analogies well within the grasp of a general and popular Christian readership such as those who are familiar with InterVarsity Press. Readers will not miss the primary question asked in each chapter, even as the chapter-titles clearly show some social psychological insights to aspects of unity and division within and among churches. More importantly, Cleveland's presentation did not come across as cut-and-dry empirical reports. The theories and processes that she has engaged do cover the pertinent cases and findings, such as group polarization, shared identity, prejudices, group homogeneity effect, categorization processes of ingroup and outgroups, sociometer, social identity theory, self-serving bias, self-attribution theory, and conflict dynamics between groups such as black sheep, cultural identity, and common identity marker. And because of Cleveland's sharp focus, she has been able to channel discussions toward reconciliation and healing in interchurch and intercultural Christian relations today. If there is a major drawback, Cleveland does not explain how her project would weigh in for churches that typically locate or justify their disunity on grounds of the fundamental differences in theology or theological systems. She presents her data as if churches should be reasonably open to these hidden dynamics at work. As a result, readers who are not convinced by her propositions – no doubt well collated from social psychological insights – would wonder if disunity is indeed a consequence arising and continuing entirely from social psychology intersubjectivities, in and between individuals and groups. To Cleveland's aid, her concluding chapter challenges churches/Christians who have formulated identities that have become too small and too color blinded (or culturally blinded) in ways that no longer commensurate with the pre-eminence of Christians' identity we have all received in Christ. And with her earlier chapter on creating positive cross-cultural interactions to correct blind spots and biasness, and antidotes from other chapters on reconciliation, this will be warmly received as a

resource with good and practical suggestions.

Here is why I would recommend both volumes. As an ecumenist who has examined the ecumenical recognition of churches in interdisciplinary perspectives, I appreciated the value each brings to the table, despite my critique of their weaknesses. Sebates moderates between highly dense subject fields for an advanced Christian readership, while Cleveland presents the information much more accessibly to a general to popular Christian audience. If only these volumes were available when I first started to write my Ph.D. dissertation, I would have cut my navigation of the maze by six months of rigorous work. That said, historical and ecumenical theologians would probably not be convinced by these volumes, especially Cleveland's, if Sebates and others' work are not available to show the complicities and multi-dimensionality involved. We stand at a threshold of a yet better future, with better resources that inform of the churches' realities, which cannot be explained merely by theological accounts. Non-theological factors, such as human dynamics, often provide explanations that theological truth purports. For instance, while theological anthropology recognizes human propensity to sin on account of the Fall and human altruism to the *imago dei*, social psychology explains human behavior without necessarily connecting behaviorism to the divine; however, it does not necessarily mean that theological truth and social scientific understanding cannot cohere so much as to compel readers to choose between either of the conceptions. Ultimately, social psychology's empirical findings and theorizations should line up with biblical truth, because all truth is God's truth, and they should not contradict. Any ambiguities or ambivalence between the findings of social/human sciences and theological claims means that more work is required to clarify the extent of their complementarity or differentiation. Furthermore, the lack of apparent complementarity could also mean that scientific explanations remain incomplete renditions of Truth even as human apprehension of truth will never arrive at full archetypal theology known only to God.

As Cleveland opens her book, we all hold various notions of right from wrong, and as Christians, we prize some articulations of truth and condemn or criticize others. Without relativizing differences, Christians are called to respond to differences and be bridge-bearers for Christ. And often without our awareness or conscious knowledge, we respond and react to those who are like-minded (ingroups) and those who differ (outgroups) because of the layering of group conformity dynamics at work. These segregations continue, often unjustifiably, when we focus on what differentiates us, and because of the suspicion, prejudices, and stereotypes we hold against each other. At times, differences are exaggerated to the extent that their common identities are no longer recognizable. Competing groups become further polarized for identity-formation, likability, security, comfort, and stability. Group categorization occurs, and thereby distorts mutual reception of each other, especially when information against the other is exaggerated to disparage or belittle them, and when we condone what we would not normally accept from a less-favorable outgroup because of group-serving biasness, ingroup favoritism, or group attribution dynamics. Through these processes and other dynamics in cultural wars (which replay these dynamics in cultural complicities instead of only in inter-ecclesiastical battles) we develop mutual perceptions and influence equivocally, thereby exacerbating disagreements and widening the gulf between groups. Anyone who has worked with people would be able to attest to many of these reported dynamics. And with the more advance explanations in Sebates' volume, readers would be poised to relate their own realities with their experiences of successes and failures in the course of their life and ministry. Could these mistakes have been avoided if churches and leaders were equipped with the knowledge as to how humans interact and how groups work with or against each other?

If theological education in the twenty-first century and beyond can no longer ignore other disciplinary contribution to the quest for truth about God, creation, and creation's roles in God's world, then, both Sebates

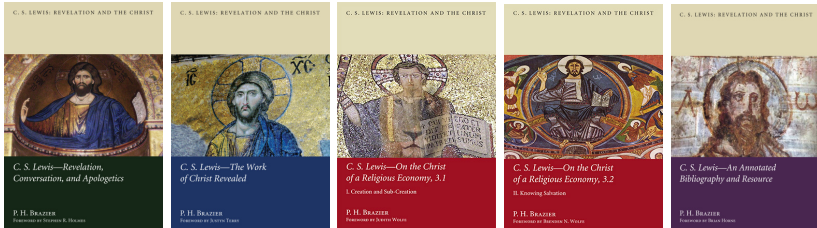
and Cleveland would enrich our goal. I conclude this review-article as one convinced of the importance of interdisciplinary work, and of the prospective role theological education can become as God's change agents in the churches and society. Thus, I ask, what are the pillars of seminary education today, if the years of formal theological education are the seasons God equips workers for His service in His field? God-field, we must remember, exists in culture even though eschatologically, this temporal sphere and other-worldly existence are also God's field. We can only seek to be God's change agents where we are called, placed, and planted. No one escapes the socio, political, and ecclesiastical realities of life that we are placed as disciples of Christ. Real-life ministry reveals that inasmuch as biblical, historical, theological, and practical ministry foundations are needed, ministry (that is inherently relational and transformational) requires some competency in the bolts and nuts of human intra-personal interaction, human sociality, and intra-and-intergroup processes. To emulate Christ's incarnational ministry of reconciliation is to be light/love-bearers and boundary-crossers between ingroups and outgroups, and here, insights from social psychology could enrich God's workers preparing for service in God's field. Otherwise, when we are eventually placed for service, our own conceptions, esteems, quarrels, attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminations, could stall the witness we are called to bear, mobilize, and crossfrontiers. Hence, I conclude that all who seek service in the name of Christ should not ignore the two books under review, even as we await a more focused treatment of social psychology in and for the churches' manifold witness and mission of the gospel among the churches and in the world.

TER

Review Article

C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ

James. A. Motter



KEYWORDS:

| C.S. Lewis | Amateur Theologian | Systematic Theology |
| Revelation | Apologetics | Mere Christianity |

P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—Revelation, Conversion and Apologetics*, Series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Book 1, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2012). Print and Kindle/e-Book editions. ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-718-0. \$35.00 (paperback).

P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—The Work of Christ Revealed*, Series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Book 2, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2012). Print and Kindle/e-Book editions. ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-719-7. \$23.00 (paperback).

P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—On the Christ of a Religious Economy, I. Creation and Sub-Creation*. Series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Book 3.1, (Eugene,

OR: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2013). Print and Kindle/e-Book editions. ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-720-3. \$35.00 (paperback). \$35.00 (paperback).

P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—On the Christ of a Religious Economy*, II. Knowing Salvation. Series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Book 3.2, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2014). Print and Kindle/e-Book editions. ISBN 13: 978-1-62032-982-5. \$38.00 (paperback).

P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—An Annotated Bibliography and Resource*, Series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Book 4, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, Wipf and Stock, 2012). Print edition only. ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-906-1. \$35.00 (paperback).

INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, by Dr. Paul H. Brazier is comprised of four volumes and an annotated bibliography. I intend in this brief review to provide sufficient information for prospective readers to make an informed decision regarding the merit of the series.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Paul Brazier is an independent theologian and scholar living in London. His knowledge of C.S. Lewis seems to be rather prodigious. This is coupled with a solid understanding of systematic theology. Together these two factors enable Dr. Brazier to reveal meaningful insights into Lewis's theology across all his writings. Although Lewis never did produce a comprehensive systematic theology, the author organizes Lewis' thought in a structured way. He provides what Lewis never did: a systematic theology of Lewis' Christian beliefs.

Dr. Brazier has exemplary credentials for this monumental task. He holds multiple degrees, including a B.A in Fine Art, an M.Phil in

Education, and an M.A. and Ph.D in Systematic Theology. His academic training is evident throughout—systematic theology shows up in his “content,” education in his “process.” In addition, Dr. Brazier is well-positioned in the world of C.S. Lewis. He is a long-time associate of The University of Oxford C.S. Lewis Society and serves as design editor for the recently launched *Journal of Inklings Studies*. This biannual journal provides a forum for rigorous academic engagement with the thought of Oxford’s revered “Inklings,” including: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield and their intellectual and literary peers and forebears, such as G.K. Chesterton and George MacDonald. Thus, the author is connected to vast network of academics who share his passion for C.S. Lewis.

It is difficult to imagine the effort required to produce such a work of erudition. We who read his output and put it to good use owe him a great debt. There may be authors wiser in interpreting the theology of C.S. Lewis, but I have not met them.

WHAT THE REVIEWER EXPECTED

As I undertook the task of reading approximately 1,300 pages my hope was to gain a deeper understanding of Lewis’s theology. To that end, my knowledge of Lewis’s spiritually formative experiences and his specific theological positions was greatly enhanced by these books. Although I was already aware of a most of what Lewis had to say about theology, the rich context and logical framework that Paul Brazier provided took what were mere puzzle pieces of knowledge and assembled them into an image of the great man’s theological thought.

Lewis’s great friend, Owen Barfield, once commented on the “organic” nature of Lewis’s writings across all genres. Barfield said: “Somehow what Lewis thought about everything was secretly present in what he said about anything.” I witness this phenomenon every time I re-read an

essay or one of Lewis's books. Still, Paul Brazier's systematic approach has opened my eyes to new linkages across books, new variations on essential Lewis themes, and new evidence of the consistent body of thought that cuts across all of C.S. Lewis's writings. Prior knowledge has been crystalized as a result of reading these books.

There was one un-anticipated benefit from reading this seminal work. I learned a great deal, not just about Lewis' theology, but about theology broadly. I am no trained theologian; however, after my first pass through Brazier's works I now know considerably more about both systematic theology and Christian history than before. This was a most pleasant bonus. Did Paul Brazier meet this reviewer's expectations? Absolutely, and so much more.

ON LEWIS THE THEOLOGIAN

There are many experts, clergy and academics alike, who have come to believe that Lewis was a mere amateur theologian. Those who deny Lewis' credentials include such dubious witnesses as A.N. Wilson and John Beversluis, and Ayn Rand seems rather unhinged in her diatribe. Naturally, Lewis' fellow Oxford dons thought him out-of-court writing books on Christianity, and many contemporary Anglican clerics deemed him their inferior. Still, such credible experts such as David F. Ford, Rachel Muers, and Colin E. Gunton overlook him. Even N.T. Wright seems cautious in his assessment, referring to him instead as an "apologist." Naysayers willingly grant that he was an effective advocate of the core principles of the Christian faith so well expressed in the vernacular of the common man. But they discount his credentials as a theologian. After all, despite Lewis' exceedingly rare "triple Firsts" at Oxford, his course of study included the classics, philosophy and English literature, not theology. For this reason alone some dismiss Lewis as a serious theologian.

I think they are wrong. It is true that in his day Lewis would have been considered an "amateur," however this label would not be the result of

limited knowledge or substandard output, but rather by the fact that he did not do this sort of work for a living. Indeed, in theology, Lewis was self-taught, but his prodigious reading coupled with his incomparable mind produced extraordinary expertise.

Paul Brazier builds a compelling case that C.S. Lewis was a first rate theologian. I have heard arguments on both sides over the years, but Brazier's case is convincing. Despite the fact that Lewis did not produce a systematic theology, the author demonstrates that Lewis' theology is original, comprehensive, systematic and orthodox. Brazier's approach is not so much to dismantle opposing views, but to delve into Lewis' theology at sufficient depth to clearly demonstrate its theological profundity. He notes that Lewis made unique contributions to the field of theology (e.g., his "Argument from Desire," and his lesser-known theory of revelation, "Transposition"). In my opinion, this series of book thoroughly lays to rest any notion that C.S. Lewis was a mere "amateur" as a theologian.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS SERIES?

This resource is not for everyone. These are lengthy, scholarly works. So, who should find value in this resource? I imagine there are four categories of prospective readers. First, there is the "casual" Christian reader who enjoys quick reads that inspire spirituality. If the reader is looking for a short and entertaining piece on the life and writings of C.S. Lewis, I advise that reader to look elsewhere. Casual readers will find many worthy companion books to help "unpack" Lewis' thought. But, I suspect 1,300 pages will exceed their curiosity. There are many concise books for this sort of reader, but this is not among them.

Second, there is the "apologetics" reader who seeks to enhance his or her familiarity with basic arguments for the defence of the faith. Here again, there are other fine books specifically designed for that purpose. While there is much here that is useful for apologetics purposes, these

books would not be the first direction I would point such readers.

Third, there is the “neophyte Lewis aficionado” who is drawn to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and possibly even *Mere Christianity* or *The Great Divorce*. This reader will find much of interest here, but the sheer volume of information may exceed such a reader’s appetite. For those who seek a deeper understanding of Lewis’ theological symbolism in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there are many fine resources available for that purpose. I would not dissuade Lewis neophytes from venturing into this series, for it will certainly whet their appetite to know more about this great man. However, there are other books better-suited to this reader’s stage in the Lewis journey.

Forth, there is the “serious” student and/or instructor of the life and writings of C.S. Lewis. This sort of reader will find this series of books to be an absolutely indispensable resource. I heartily recommend that every such reader—especially those in academia who teach about C.S. Lewis—should purchase, read, use, and enjoy this incomparable resource. There is no more valuable resource that I have yet found.

KEY TOPICS ADDRESSED

To expect a reviewer to summarize such a comprehensive work as this is not unlike expecting him to summarize *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Paul Brazier’s work is simply too large, too comprehensive to do this. I shall leave all that for the reader. (Note: there is a section at the end of this review taken from the author’s website that describes the systematic flow of the series.) My purpose is to verify the worth of the book, not to distil it.

So, what does this series of book address? The author covers, in significant detail, the broad spectrum of Lewis’ theological thought across all Lewis’ writings. If he has left anything out, I cannot identify it.

The following is by no means an exhaustive list, but is intended to provide the reader some sense of what Paul Brazier covers, including:

- Lewis' thoughts on The Trinity.
- Lewis' innovative (and popular) argument for belief, the Trilemma.
- Lewis' commitment to Patristic orthodoxy as a basis for his theology.
- Lewis' position on church Doctrines including Original Sin, Total Depravity and Hell.
- Lewis' views on soteriology, including Election and Predestination.
- Lewis' affinity with Arminianism versus Calvinism.
- Lewis' theory of "Christological prefiguration" (the True Myth).
- Lewis' profound theory of revelation, known as "Transposition."
- Lewis' precise delineation of what constitutes "Mere Christianity."

Author Brazier pulls all this together in a framework that illuminates the consistency of Lewis' thought across diverse literary genres. He delves deeply into such works as *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. He tracks the evolution of Lewis' thought over time. There is no more useful resource anywhere, other than Lewis' great works themselves.

Moreover, Paul Brazier covers many other related topics, such as:

- Lewis' philosophical influences (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, George Berkeley and Henry More).
- Lewis' theological influences (St. Paul, Justin Martyr, Vincentius, Augustine, Aquinas, Richard Hooker and Richard Baxter).
- Lewis' Platonism and its intersection with his Christian theology.
- Lewis' systematic method in evangelism and apologetics.
- Lewis' philosophical and theological evolution.
- Events that shaped his works (e.g., the Anscombe-Lewis debate).

The more important question is not what the author covers, but how well he covers it. Paul Brazier's thoroughness has its rewards. As I read, there were new terms I had not before encountered. Whenever this happened, Brazier provided an adequate definition. At no point was I forced to consult a lexicon to "track" what he was saying. Better yet, when he

wrote something that really tweaked my interest, at that very moment when I was thinking: “OK, Mr. Brazier, tell me more” he did precisely that in the ensuing paragraphs. As an educator, Paul Brazier demonstrates a keen awareness of the reader’s natural curiosity. He has a remarkable ability to provide the additional information the reader needs for his points to resonate fully.

This is a work of erudition. It is comprehensive and detailed. But, it is not concise. There were moments in the reading where I found myself wanting to move a bit faster. But that is the trade-off one makes for such erudition. Paul Brazier covers many topics in this book and brings in a many outside references. Not all were of interest to me. For example, Paul is very knowledgeable about the life and writings of Karl Barth, and he uses this expertise as a basis for benchmarking Lewis’ thought. If I were a student of Barth, I would find these insights compelling. But I am not, so the analogies had less meaning for me.

On rare occasion Brazier provided a level of detail that exceeded my curiosity. Here I must confess that I am no ardent advocate of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I realize this is to my detriment, and I hope to correct this in time. But, while I “get” that Lewis’ theology has been “ported” to *The Chronicles of Narnia* (and *The Cosmic Trilogy*), I prefer to take my Lewis “straight up” in nonfiction form. Consequently, where Brazier reached deep into *The Chronicles of Narnia* to illuminate Lewis’ specific thinking, I shifted into “scan mode.” This is not to say those who cherish *The Chronicles of Narnia* will not find much of great interest—I believe they will. Certainly, when Brazier went into *The Great Divorce* for illumination I paid rapt attention; even more so when he pointed to *Mere Christianity* or *The Problem of Pain* or *The Weight of Glory*. Although I did not take full advantage of them, his segues into *The Chronicles of Narnia* are entirely warranted and, I am sure, insightful.

Perhaps the most important question a reader will have is this: Is the content credible? This is a difficult question to answer, if only because much of the knowledge the author imparted was new to me. It is difficult

to posit categorically that everything Paul Brazier says in this book is accurate and based upon scholarly research. I immersed myself in Brazier's text with an open mind (as Lewis advises us) and a degree of trust. I was confident that my advance knowledge of C.S. Lewis would enable me to quickly red-flag any errors. But, in the final analysis, I found no such errors in any of these books.

More importantly, I contend that everything that I knew about C.S. Lewis prior to reading Brazier's book held true in his text. This is not to say there were no new insights, for there were many. His analysis of the Anscombe-Lewis debate is a prime example. The author's insights corresponded with my prior assessment of the situation, but he went much deeper, providing a new perspective on the impact of this debate on Lewis' future writings. Other topics where Paul Brazier enlightened me the most include: (a) Lewis' commitment to Patristic orthodoxy (b) Lewis' apologetics method (c) Lewis' concise delineation of what "Mere Christianity" really means and (d) Lewis' theory of revelation, or "Transposition."

I have not met nor spoken with Paul Brazier, but I have exchanged a series of emails with him related to questions I had about Lewis. In every case, I have found Paul Brazier to be responsive and generous with his feedback. Every author should be so committed to his subject. How many authors create a companion website solely to support a book? Paul Brazier has done this. It reflects his commitment to excellence.

Reading *C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ* has enhanced my knowledge of C.S. Lewis, and expanded my knowledge of theology and Christian history. That the author achieves all this at the same time is the true value of this book.

I say without reservation that this series of books, *C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ*, is the single most valuable Lewis resource among the several hundred books "about" C.S. Lewis that I own. This is meaningful, for most books about Lewis are excellent and those by

Peter Kreeft, James Como and Alister McGrath are exemplary. This is the most in-depth resource on C.S. Lewis that I have ever seen, with the exception of Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis Companion and Guide*. When I need biographical detail on Lewis I will look to George Sayer, Alister McGrath and others. But when I want to go deep on Lewis's theology—the realm of his most profound ideas—I will turn first to Paul Brazier. If there is a more useful book on Lewis, I have not found it.

To all serious students and teachers of C.S. Lewis: I encourage you to purchase this set, to read and reflect on its illuminating content and to enjoy its eminent readability. You will not be disappointed.

ABOUT THE SERIES ¹

C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ is a series about Lewis's theology and his beliefs and inevitably his life. At the centre of his writings and his beliefs is *the Christ*. Therefore there is a systematic progress and basis to the books:

Book 1: C.S. Lewis—Revelation, Conversion, and Apologetics

Part 1—

The series opens with Lewis's conversion. Given his convinced atheism as a young man, what turned him? We can also consider the conversion experience of his wife Joy Davidman. And compare Lewis with another orthodox Christian and 20th century intellectual giant, Karl Barth. How do the two compare?

Part 2—

What was Lewis's method? Who were his disparagers, his opponents? What were his sources? Popular apologist he may have been but also a serious philosophical theologian.

¹ This summary is based on material from the dedicated website: www.cslewisandthechrist.net.

Part 3–

On this basis we can consider a detailed developmental survey of his work from the point of his conversion through to his death and how detractors may be answered. What can we conclude about his work and his understanding of the Christ?

Book 2: C.S. Lewis–The Work of Christ Revealed*Part 1–*

At the centre of Lewis's conversion was the Christ, the Word of God. This historical event was different to all other religions. Therefore what did Lewis make of Scripture as the w/Word of God and as witness to this event. What did he understand of how revelation worked?

Part 2–

To say that this Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate raises serious questions, especially how we debate with those who deny: therefore, for Lewis, this man Jesus was God, or a bad, or a mad, man. An analysis here of what Lewis and the tradition asserts is essential. How do we know the truth about Jesus? How did Lewis decide?

Part 3–

Lewis also asserted that Christ worked through other religious, other mythological systems of belief, though these were incomplete and fragmentary examples, subservient to Christianity. Therefore we examine Lewis's doctrine of Christological prefiguration.

Book 3.1: C.S. Lewis–On The Christ of a Religious Economy. I. Creation and Sub-Creation*Part 1–*

If Jesus is the Christ, God incarnate, why did he come? The answer lies in a doctrine of creation – Christ as the agent of creation. The answer also

is in humanity's wilful Fall into original sin: where Christ is the agent of redemption. What did Lewis believe here? How does he explain creation and redemption.

Part 2–

With J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis subscribed to a God-given capacity in humanity to sub-create. This led Lewis into writing his own narratives, by analogy: *The Space Trilogy*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Till We Have Faces*. What do these stories tell us about God, and God's plan of salvation for humanity.

Book 3.2: C.S. Lewis—On The Christ of a Religious Economy II. Knowing Salvation

Part 1–

How do we know we are saved? How do we come to know about God's economy for humanity? Scripture asserts how Christ is the Logos, reason, and we have God-given speech to complement so that we can know. How did Lewis the philosopher tackle detractors here?

Part 2–

We are not left alone: we have the Church (though religion can be ambivalent). What was Lewis's doctrine of the Church, and of ministry. And what role do the Church play in a religious economy for Lewis? Is the Church truly the body of Christ?

Part 3–

Finally we come to the end times, the what-is-to-come: the eschaton, the four last things – death judgement, heaven and hell. Having considered the Church leads into the question of atonement, and with it what is meant by substitution and redemption, essentially Christ's work of salvation on the cross, but also, election, heaven and hell: resurrection and salvation, eternity and condemnation. What did Lewis say of humanity in relation to God, now Immanuel, God with us, incarnate, crucified and resurrected for

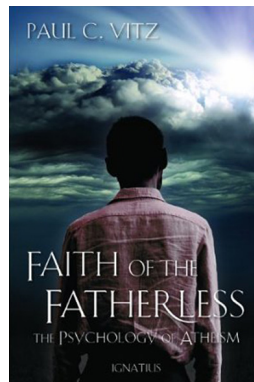
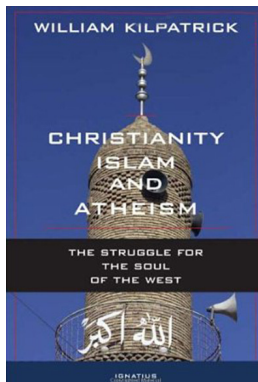
us? What was Lewis's understanding of atonement – i.e. how salvation through the Cross works. What of Lewis's own end, and that of his wife? What role is there for the sufferance of salvation? And what of love?—the love that created the world, that moves the stars and the heavens? Love—and an understanding of corrupted love—is at the heart of Lewis's works.

TER

Review Article

Faith-Atheism, Islam and the West

P. H. Brazier



KEYWORDS:

| religion | multi-faith perspective | atheism |
| politics | truth | multiculturalism |

William Kilpatrick. *Christianity, Islam and Atheism. The Struggle for the Soul of the West*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012. hb. xiv, 316. ISBN: 978-1-58617-696-9. £18.99, \$24.95

Paul C. Vitz. *Faith of the Fatherless. The Psychology of Atheism*, 2nd Edition, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2013. pp. xviii, 214. ISBN: 978-1-58617-687-7. £11.08, \$17.95..

As a noun, religion¹ is often taken to mean belief in and acknowledgement of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or the “gods,” and therefore a particular system of faith and worship, of belief and ethics, often pursued with commitment and devotion. But religion does not necessarily imply belief in God, or the “gods.” There is in effect no generally agreed definition of religion. Indeed, according to some post-modern psychologists religion is often taken to mean an obsession (so, is lifestyle-driven OCD a religion?—or does it take the place of authentic religion?). The term is used with widely different meanings. The Roman writer Cicero defined *religio* as the giving of proper honour, respect and reverence to the divine, by which he meant the “gods.”² According to Cicero such “religion” was a dutiful honouring, as distinct from a superstition, an empty fear of the “gods.”³ Cicero’s definition implies an object—but this object may only be in the mind of the believer. In addition, religion may embrace non-theistic belief systems from Buddhism to Marxism, or from football to popular culture, all of which exhibit the characteristics often associated with objectively theistic religions. Perhaps any philosophy of life that exhibits a world view of sorts and that embraces some notion of right and wrong is in some way implicitly religious, whether a “god” or the God is acknowledged or not. Genuine religion—which is the foundation of these two books by William Kilpatrick and Paul C. Vitz—is defined and measured by two actual events: first, the Fall into original sin by humanity, and second the Christ event, the Cross-Resurrection-Ascension. If we believe we live in an age when religion in the West is now obsolete and done away with we are wrong: specific anti-religion movements (as in Soviet Russia; or manifested today in certain aspects of Western liberalism) merely replace one religion with another. Humanity cannot stop being religious; people believe themselves to be irreligious or

1 From the Middle English, originally in the sense life under monastic vows, derived from Old French, and from Latin, *religion* implied obligation and reverence.

2 Cicero, *The Nature of the gods*, 2.3.8. See also, Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, Vol. IV, 2.53.161. *Religio, religionis*, reverence and obligation, sanction and worship, rite and religion.

3 *Ibid.*, 1.4.2.

anti-religion, but that is in itself a form of religion. For example, Sjoerd L. Bonting notes how the sociologist William S. Bainbridge, in the context of “the New Paradigm in the sociology of religion states that ‘religion is an inevitable feature of all human societies and that secularization merely weakens old religious movements to the advantage of new ones rather than marking the triumph of science over religion’.”⁴

* * *

Published by the US West Coast Roman Catholic publisher Ignatius Press William Kilpatrick and Paul C. Vitz’s work is underpinned by a recognition of this crisis of definition in post-modern Western society, what one reviewer on the back cover of Kilpatrick’s volume terms, “the politically correct miasma of unreality that envelops and explains us.”⁵ William Kilpatrick, in *Christianity, Islam and Atheism. The Struggle for the Soul of the West*, explains how a multicultural and, what he terms, a common-ground approach to Islam won’t work. Why?—Because Islam is in essence a religion of conquest and subjugation. When Western governments seek to protect Islam one pertinent question is rarely raised—which Islam is to be protected? The Islam subscribed to by millions of Muslims across the Middle East, the traditional and historic Islam exercised in demonstration, violence, bombings, and military subjugation, or is it the Islam which is a projection of a Western liberal fantasy about religion, where religion is privatised, and of no discernable threat or contradiction to the political *status quo*. Many people in the West led by liberal academics find Islam, its religious traditions, and its pro-active “military” adventurism representative of a religion that is unpalatable; therefore—at the dictates of Western governments—Islam is redefined to make it palatable to Western liberalism. This is done in

4 Sjoerd L. Bonting, “Theological Implications of Possible Extraterrestrial Life.” *Zygon*, 38.3 (2003) pp. 587-602, see, p. 600, quoting from William S. Bainbridge “Extra-Terrestrial Tales.” *Science*, 279.5351 (Jan. 30, 1998), p. 671.

5 Robert Spencer.

particular when it conflicts with a belief in multiculturalism, which is rooted in a doctrine of Indifferentism. Western liberal society believes it can champion a multicultural approach to Islam, and that Muslims will sit quietly and happily alongside people of other faith, or no faith, without harming them. Such Islamic religious “aggressivism,” as Kilpatrick terms it, contradicts the foundation of Western liberal society. But Islam is also perceived to be a threat to the Gospel. By comparison the Gospel and the atonement that issues from Christ’s sacrifice merely needs to be preached in freedom: people can choose to respond, or not, the responsibility belongs to them. If Islam—in Kilpatrick’s estimation—is an antagonistic, belligerent, and proselytising religion, he is also critical of the newly aggressive atheism,⁶ a confrontational atheism that attacks the Church and Christianity specifically, but also religious belief generally. Kilpatrick notes pertinently that the civil liberties that define the West, in particular in Europe and the United States, issue from Christian civilization, built on the freedom Christ’s sacrifice buys us: to believe, or not. Therefore, a central thesis to Kilpatrick’s studied and considered volume is that—in his words—a strong and vibrant Christianity is necessary to stand and defend against a resurgent traditional Islam that for many seeks the conversion of the West, or its destruction if it will not submit. An Iranian-Muslim convert to Biblical Christianity that I have known for more than 30 years commented how Islam and Christianity are in many ways opposites. Not only does Islam deny the divinity of Jesus, but the two religions differ in many fundamental aspects of religious ethics: both the Koran and the Hadith advocate the judicious killing and enslavement of non-Muslims, Jesus asks us to love our enemies; Mohammad asked his followers to kill the infidels, while Jesus turned the other cheek and questioned those who were about to stone the woman taken in adultery; Mohammad sanctioned the cutting-off of the hands and feet of prisoners; Jesus asks us to forgive,

6 In particular, the so-called New Atheists, the scientist Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens (who describes himself as an ‘anti-theist’), the philosopher A.C. Grayling, the journalist-writer Sam Harris, the novelist Martin Amis and the author and screen writer Ian McEwan, amongst many others., often seen as media celebrities.

forgive again and keep forgiving—to be reconciled at all costs, not wage war to defend and promote our little religious empires.

So, what exactly does Kilpatrick say and how does he structure his work? The book is in five parts, eighteen chapters in all. Opening with, “Part One, The Islamic Threat” Kilpatrick examines the state of Western irreligiosity: “the crisis of faith”: when threatened by Islam Western liberal intellectuals oddly stoke-up their criticism of Christianity (the media’s love-affair with the New Atheists). Kilpatrick sees confused Christians as aiding and abetting this marginalization of the Christian basis of Western societies (p. 14f.). Kilpatrick then considers the “Islamization of the world,” whereby the perpetual aim of Muslims is to submit the world to their religion, to Mohammed’s agenda. Therefore Kilpatrick asks whether the West fully understands the threat, whilst the general populace hide in celebrity culture and consumer goods, and, for example, the British Labour government bans the pairing of the word “Muslim” with “terrorism” (p. 17): multi-culturalism must tolerate all religions and cultures (with the exception, one may conclude of Western, Caucasian, Christian culture and religion). Kilpatrick therefore sees a cover-up in the West which suppresses and denies the Church (a cover-up defined in neo-gnostic terms—i.e. The da Vinci Code), whilst censoring any criticism of Islam: “Secular militants are acting as though Christians are a threat to our culture . . . The multicultural elites want to silence not only Christians but also any who question the politically correct view of Islam.” (pp. 48 & 49.) Kilpatrick therefore examines the prosecution of Christians for preaching the gospel and the legal attempts to protect Islam from criticism by Christians. Thus we move to “Part Two. Islam’s Enablers.” For example, “Secularists—lights out for the Enlightenment”: without its Christian foundations the Enlightenment and all its freedoms are lost, asserts Kilpatrick’s. This is demonstrated by Kilpatrick examining cases of secular humanist atheists—not Christians—in the West who criticize the brutality of Islam, and are then prosecuted, persecuted, by their governments for anti-Islamic activity (p. 53f.). So, asks Kilpatrick,

what role do self-confessed atheists have in the spiritual and intellectual road map that is the West today and how does their legacy compare with the perceived threat of the Church? The answer is obvious when one considers the millions killed during the twentieth century for ideological reasons, from the Gulags to abortion clinics, often by well-meaning self-identified liberals (p. 59f.). What exactly do the New Atheists intend to replace the presence of Christianity in Europe with is a pertinent question raised. Kilpatrick's critique then shifts to multiculturalism: multicultural openness is answered by Muslim assertiveness. It is from this point on that we find Kilpatrick's central thesis:

Why doesn't multiculturalism work? The answer is that multiculturalism is essentially a form of relativism in which morality is relative to culture. The corresponding belief is that the members of one culture have no right to make judgments about the rightness or wrongness of another culture's traditions or practices. Thus, even common sense observations about group behaviour can leave one open to charges of racism, homophobia, or Islamophobia . . . Pope Benedict's phrase "dictatorship of relativism" is an apt description of these attempts to control thought and speech in the name of tolerance. (p. 78.)

Kilpatrick continues,

. . . Because of its inherent divisiveness, the multiculturalist model would eventually fail in any society. But it is particularly fatal to a society that has in its midst an aggressive cultural group that refuses to subscribe to relativism. By neglecting to stand up for their own values, traditions, and religious heritage—indeed, by denigrating them—European countries left themselves almost defenceless against a resurgent Islam. Islam's success in Europe has been built in large part on European self-doubt. (p. 78f.)

Therefore this section concludes with a critique of "Christian enablers." Many Christians—castigated by the New Atheists who argued that the Church wants to impose its creed on Western society—echo the tolerance of multicultural relativism and are therefore, to Kilpatrick, enablers (p.

94f.). The remaining sections and chapters fill out the detail: questioning the Quran; what we make of Jesus, as compared to Mohammad; the Western cultural wars, as compared to “the terror war”; the warrior code endemic to humanity; the ensuing cold war with Islam; ultimately, the war of ideas: what, therefore, should Christians do?

Without qualification this is an excellent book that reveals the socio-political chaos that underpins the West. Translate that chaos into religious terms and you have violence and intimidation meted out on Christians, not only by aggressive Muslims, but also by successive Western governments. Should this not be standard reading for students in schools, as part of multi-faith religious education lessons (a curriculum that excised the Bible in many schools years ago)? Kilpatrick’s book should be subject to wider reading in the academy and in government circles but it won’t be. If there is perhaps one criticism it is Kilpatrick’s referencing. Examples given by him are referenced to blogs and similar subjective sources rather than to newspapers, journals, and academic studies. One is forced to ask whether blogs and social media are as trustworthy as the official media (newspapers, reports, etc.), particularly given that the social media revolution is defined by self-opinionated gossiping? A keyword that is marginalized in Kilpatrick’s volume evident in the human generated, socio-cultural, religio-political landscape, of the West—a word that might help explain so much that Kilpatrick rightly criticizes—is “freemasonry,” in particular the relationship between liberal-agitprop groups (in particular gay rights groups, feminist caucuses), say, in Britain, and political parties and governments (dominated by freemasonry) of all persuasions. Freemasonry and Islam are very similar “religions,” based on a human-generated mono-“god” that is believed to sit back and bequeath power and authority to the ruling elite, to rule in tyranny—or so the elites will secretly believe from their Feuerbachian projection.

Paul C. Vitz focuses in his study on a particular psychology relating to the so-called New Atheists. In *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*, he does not try to side-step the culturally specific and relativistic observations of Sigmund Freud, but starts with the projection theory of religion. If the opinion of psychoanalysts that belief in God issues from a projected desire for security, where does this leave the atheism of so many confident intellectuals in the West? Vitz argues that such psychoanalysis provides a much more sound explanation of atheism than it does of religious belief. To do this Vitz implicitly uses a technique used by C. S. Lewis in the mid-twentieth century: turning the hermeneutic of suspicion on the sceptics themselves. (Lewis used this against the de-mythologizing methods of sceptical New Testament scholars: could they stand up to their own rigorous deconstruction?—The answer was no.) The central thesis to Vitz’s study is that disappointment in an individual’s father—through death, violence, absence, abuse, mere distance—*frequently* leads to a rejection of God (issuing implicitly from the Christian triune concept of God). Vitz takes great pains to present and analyse the biographies of *celebrity* atheists from the last four hundred years to explain and justify this defective father theory of atheism. Why celebrity atheists? Because all the names, from the inception of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment on (often, but not always, issuing from the Romantic hedonistic cult of the wealthy individual), read like a “who’s-who” of intellectuals and artists whose influence on ideas and society, and thereby the herd of ordinary people, was immense.

Therefore this is a book that constitutes a survey—biographical and intellectual—of *influential* atheists from around 1600, which demonstrates a “defective father proposition,” and a consistent explanation of the intense atheism of influential thinkers. Importantly, these thinkers are *self-confessed atheists* who, for whatever reason, were formed (for better or worse) by the prevailing Christian culture, which they chose to reject (in varying degrees). Perhaps one question that issues from reading Vitz’s analysis is, ‘Which gods did these people reject?’ Vitz does balance this

study of self-confessed atheists with evidence from a theistic control group: believers—that is, a survey of the leading *defenders* of Christianity who exhibited few defective fathers. In conclusion an exploratory comparison of male and female atheists throws up interesting questions about other factors—psychological or otherwise—that *might* contribute to atheism.

Vitz's analysis derives from what he terms Freud's unacknowledged theory of unbelief, the acknowledgement of a relatively unexplored concept—Oedipal atheism—which produces a new theory of atheism: that the defective father hypothesis, defined in many ways by insecurity, leads to—generates—unbelief. The majority of the book then explores case studies, in distinct groups: first, atheists and their fathers (Nietzsche, Hume, Russell, Sartre, Camus, Schopenhauer, *et al*); then, abusive and weak fathers (Hobbes, Meslier, Voltaire, d'Alembert, d'Holbach, Feuerbach, Butler, Freud, H.G. Wells, *et al*); also, minor unbelievers and contemporary (often celebrity) names, who were self-confessed atheists. By comparison Vitz postulates theists and their fathers (Pascal, Berkeley, Butler, Reid, Burke, Paley, Wilberforce, Schleiermacher, Newman, Kierkegaard, Chesterton, Schweitzer, Buber, Barth, Bonhoeffer, *et al*); he then considers further evidence and qualifications in the form of “substitute fathers,” even the atheist father as a positive influence, likewise, he explores gender issues. Finally these conclusions are considered in the light of other related psychologies of unbelief, “superficial” atheism, even a consideration of autism:

In the actual practical interaction between believers and unbelievers the preceding study supports the conclusion that many an intense personal “reason” lies behind the public rejection of God. If one wishes genuinely to reach such people, one must address, probably indirectly, their underlying psychology. Aside from the common, superficial reasons, many serious unbelievers are likely to have painful memories behind their rationalization of atheism. Such interior wounds need to be fully appreciated and addressed by believers. (Vitz, p. 197)

So is atheism psychologically determined? Above and beyond conditioning we have moments of free will where we are faced with the choice, the decision to accept God or reject *Him*. What Vitz succeeds in is denying the uniqueness of attributing religious faith to irrational psychological needs; there are—equally—psychological factors, equally irrational, that may trigger atheism. However, atheism/atheist is a term with multiple meanings, nuances and objectives, subtleties which are not explored, for this reader, in the depth that may seem necessary. The obvious question in all cases is, which “god” does a self-confessed atheist choose, elect, *not* to believe in, and how does this “god” measure up against the revelation of the one true living God of the Hebrews and the Lord and Father of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, God incarnate? Likewise the validity before God’s revelation of the “gods” of some believers is not considered to the depth this particular reader would like to have seen.

* * *

In one sense these two books are about a multi-faith perspective that is innately contradictory, issuing from the confused world of post-modern relativism. The belief that one religion is as good as another is condemned by all traditional and orthodox churches, by Rome as a heresy (named Indifferentism), and considered by many Evangelical Churches as a refutation of the Gospel. If exponents of Indifferentism argue that there is no quantifiable evidence to distinguish one religion from another then this becomes a form of absolute indifferentism. Neo-Pagan secular liberal humanism, as promoted in the West, appears to be grounded in a doctrine of religious plurality and indifferentism, which states that all examples of the religious impulse in humanity are to be regarded as equal; likewise the exponents of a neo-Pagan secular liberal humanist position implicitly wait for all to arrive at the faith perspective that there is really no “god,” that we have no sure and confident religious knowledge, and certainly no revelation, therefore in this all religions must be equal because there

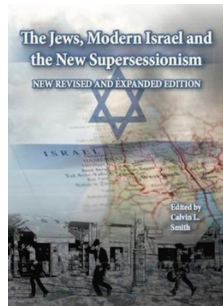
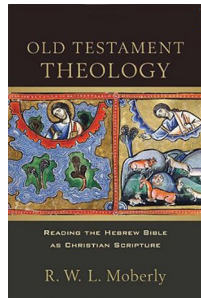
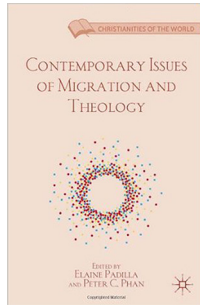
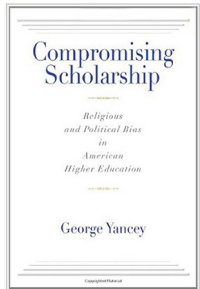
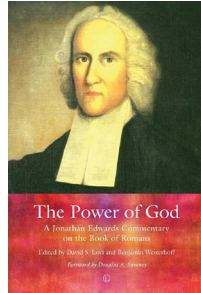
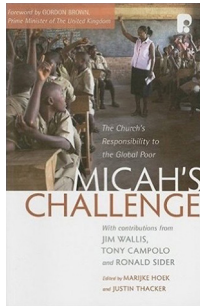
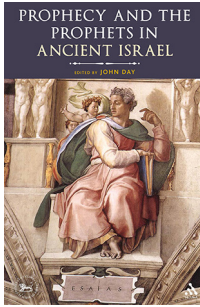
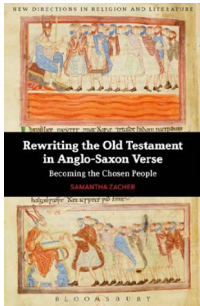
is finally no ultimate truth in them, but they must be practised in private, and not express—publically—anything that contradicts the implicitly religious Pagan nation state.

Anyone of biblical-traditional-orthodox Christian faith should be able to recognize the confused mind-set religion today is held (in the West): “Our culture has made tolerance the virtue to be prized above all virtues and intolerance the greatest sin.”⁷ But is this “tolerance” innately religious and intrinsically contradictory? Not all beliefs systems, ethics and lifestyles are deemed tolerable in post-modern Western society, and the criteria is not only implicit, veiled, hidden, but is variable from generation to generation, and from group to group. Paul C. Vitz and William Kilpatrick demonstrate how confused any sense of religious truth has become in official circles, while ordinary individuals struggle to bear witness to the veracity of the Gospel.

7 Tom Watts reviewing, D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), in *The Churchman*, 127.4, Winter 2013, pp. 359-60.

Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Reviews





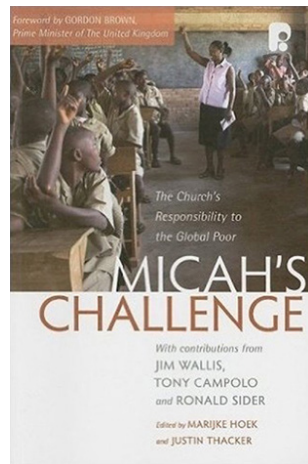
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Book Reviews

Marijke Hoek and Justin Thacker, ed. *Micah's Challenge: The Church's Responsibility to the Global Poor*. (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Paternoster, 2008).

Micah's Challenge: The Church's Responsibility to the Global Poor, is a succinct volume that is a summation of several important elements concerning the Christian world's attempt to cut the poverty rates of the poorest nations by

50% by the year 2015. In recognition of the initiative that has its roots in the Global Jubilee of 2000, the book is a geopolitical and theological response by Christian leaders from both the east and the west; the book is based on their meeting in 2007 to develop and communicate an action plan to support the United Nation's goal of ending global poverty. The common thread of the book is an evangelical view of how God as Jesus Christ saw the poor and disadvantaged and how we as Christians might



meet the challenge God gave in the Old Testament to the prophet Micah: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

Several chapters of the book take the Old Testament passage in Micah, among others issued in the New Testament, to paint a theological picture of what poverty is, how it is important to the Kingdom of God and how it is the duty and responsibility for every Christian to recognize poverty as something to be faced and eradicated. Using the biblical model of the apostle Paul, passages describe in detail the power in suffering and how we as Christians have an obligation to mirror the “radical righteousness and costly servanthood” to God’s people that Jesus modeled in His ministry (82). Contributors describe the importance Jesus showed in His ministry to the poor and the role of God’s love and faithfulness in sending Him to champion the cause of the poor, sick and suffering in His world. Through this example of Christ, a challenge is issued to the governments of the world to tie the Kingdom of God to the mission of today’s Church. Dr. Rene C. Padilla deftly relates the promises of God to the coming of the Messiah and through this His coming, God’s kingdom mission is defined. He maintains that the mission of the church is to be an active force for change especially in the areas of faith, justice, and mercy. As several authors remind the reader, when the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel becomes realized in a government’s treatment of those in poverty, the Holy Spirit is truly revealed through the church (83).

A portion of the book is devoted to the geopolitical state of the world today, and the power structures involved in creating and maintaining poverty. Social change is also discussed with an eye to the responsibility of governments as well as NGO’s (nongovernmental organizations) to change certain paradigms that were valid in the past. More attention as one author reminds us is being placed on cross cultural and transcultural efforts to lift societies out of poverty. He maintains that no longer can a “one size fits all” strategy be used. Old societal structures like the

caste system and feudal tribal arrangements must be accounted for by outside forces wishing to change the plight of the people who live within them. Cultural sensitivity becomes as important as actual resources and technological availability in some of these lands and a plea for this cross cultural sensitivity is called for.

An undeniable strength of this book is the theological and exegetical groundwork it builds in relation to the end of poverty being a God mandated activity. While the focus is placed on God's charge to Micah, the authors build a case for the responsibility of all Christians to answer Christ's call for justice to the poor and underserved. Half of the chapters draw a nearly complete picture of how the poor are defined in God's kingdom and outline in great detail using passages from both the Old and New Testaments to make the case for global social justice. Any Christian reading these verses would understand the importance of Micah's Challenge and should feel compelled to prioritize these goals within their abilities to do so, particularly those from the industrialized and rich nations. With regards to the responsibility of governments, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of Cape Town writes, "They need to hear that their citizens truly want to take the hard steps that are required, so we may truly live in a world where there is some for all, not all for some; in a world where loving kindness and mercy are valued above naked profit at the expense of the poor and weak" (18).

Half of the book introduces the reader to strategies and acts for reducing global poverty. Chapter 12 shows the relevance of this book for the local church. Andrew Bradstock outlines and explains steps that individual churches can make toward social justice. I am confident that those who read this stimulating chapter will be able to generate ideas for change even as church members will find ways to initiate change in their own lives and neighborhoods.

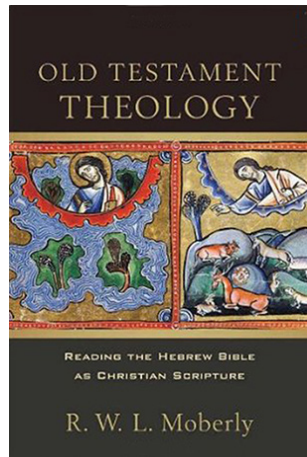
Micah's Challenge is easily readable on the topics of social justice and caring for the poor. While the chapters on governmental responsibility are written in a broad brush approach, there are concrete suggestions for the

local church to become involved in this initiative. It is an exceptionally important introductory book for those who seek to do the will of God: provide for the poor, underserved and disenfranchised in God’s kingdom here on earth. The question left after reading and re-reading it, is do we have the will to do it?

*Reviewed by Judi J. Rogers,
MAR, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.*

R. W. L. Moberly. *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic Press, 2013. hb, xxiii, 330. ISBN: £17.99, \$34.99.

At first glance, readers quickly find that this theology is different from more traditional texts on biblical theology. At only 330 pages, the book lacks the intimidating heft of other theologies, such as Waltke’s, Eichrodt’s, and von Rad’s. Likewise the introduction is a mere 6 pages rather than a long tedious discussion of academic debates regarding Old Testament theology. But the real difference lies in the book’s substance. So unlike other biblical theologies that seek to cover all the major themes and problems in the hopes of creating a great synthesis, Moberly addresses only a handful of passages chosen on the basis of their theological heft or relevance to “modern” concerns. Moberly’s



decision for depth over breadth not only permits readers to consider a wide range of evidence as they consider the significance of these passages for contemporary use but also requires them to continue to develop their own theology.

The eight passages or motifs Moberly discusses can be divided into two sections. Like the Paul's writings, the first five deal with theological concepts and the last three with practical or existential concerns. Moberly opens his investigation, appropriately enough, with Dt 6:4. He argues the passage calls readers to understand God as the object of ultimate love. If God is Lord of all then, he suggests, secular space is not morally neutral, and its ethics and ideas may conflict with the call of this passage. Chapter 2 takes up the scandalous notion of Israel's election. He beautifully explains how Israel's election reflects God's love. Interestingly, Moberly believes that interpreting Israel's election as primarily instrumental (i.e. to bless the nations) is a canonical re-reading of the original text. Moberly focusses a significant portion of the chapter to a discussion of *herem* which Moberly believes should be understood in primarily in a figurative or metaphorical fashion.

The next chapter investigates the role and meaning of manna. He explains how Israel's relationship to sustenance was illustrative of her relationship to God. In Chapter 4, Moberly turns to the thorny problem of God's immutability. I consider this chapter to be worth the price of the book by itself. With expert and thoughtful care, Moberly explains how to understand the notion understanding God as a person, capable of change, without falling into the error of Process theology. In Chapter 5, Moberly investigates two issues namely, does Isaiah predict Jesus? and the motif of exaltation and humility in Isaiah as it relates to belief in Christ.

Chapters 6-8 address problems of personal faith and action from the perspectives of Jonah, Israel's experience of God's blessing and curse, and Job's faithfulness during suffering. These chapters are particularly challenging because readers cannot ignore the existential questions they imply for their own lived-out-faith. Moberly correctly challenges

intellectual faith that fails to penetrate behavior, recognize suffering, or remain faithful during trials. Moberly ends the book with an Epilogue that explains his methodology and serves as a précis for the individual chapters. I suggest reading the Epilogue first rather than last as it is placed in the book.

Old Testament Theology is a complex read. Moberly's treatment of these selected passages offers readers a rigorous engagement of the passages while not ignoring pastoral or existential significance. I think his mindfulness of the existential questions raised by scripture is commendable. Moberly is quite right that our reading of scripture should not simply be an intellectual exercise but should impact our lives as well.

Though disappointed by Moberly's frequent acknowledgement of higher critical ideas, I was impressed by the extent to which he tried to show that these ideas could be side-stepped by looking at the passage differently. Sometimes he was successful in arguing that traditionalists and higher critics were asking the wrong questions, such as in regards to the historicity of Jonah. But more often, I found his attempt to disconnect the link between the world behind the text and the text as a Faustian bargain that dislodged the authority and value of scripture than protect it. For instance, his approach prevented him from finding more passages that prefigure Jesus in Isaiah than secular scholars permit. It also prevented him from accepting the full force of what God wanted *herem* to mean for Israel. While noting many excellent observations about this term, Moberly overlooked that wars can be waged in multiple ways, such as demonstrated by the "Cold War." I suggest that by commanding *herem*, God wanted Israel to be uncompromising in its opposition to the religion of the Canaanites. Israel was to fight paganism either by violence (hot war) and/or cultural/ideological opposition (cold war). Thus there was no necessary reason to contend that in later Israelite history, *herem* became a more figurative concept.

These negatives aside, Moberly's work remains a worthwhile read. By focusing on the tough questions, Moberly forces readers to engage the Old

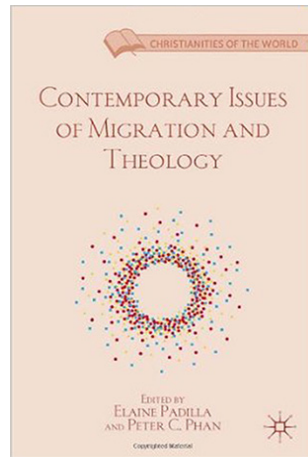
Testament at an intellectual and existential level as they consider what the passages teach about God and living a faithful life.

Reviewed by, Stephen M. Vantassel. Kings Evangelical Divinity School

Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan, eds. *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. ISBN 978-1137032881. 276 pp. USD 80

In the past two decades, there has been an explosion of interest in contemporary questions of human migration from theologians, philosophers, and religious ethicists in multiple religious traditions.

Scholars have begun to recognize that the phenomenon of migration gives rise to complex spiritual and ethical questions that merit attention, and the study of migration has begun to influence both the content and the methodology of religious thought in the academy. Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan's edited volume, *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, shows how Christian theological and ethical thought both reflects and benefits from this increased activity in religious thinking about migration. This rich and fascinating volume focuses on the Christian tradition but showcases a wide variety of perspectives and methodologies, from authors (the editors included) whose work in the field has already been and promises to be influential. The wide-ranging set of arguments found in the book mirrors the openness both of the questions religious thinkers have been asking about migration and of the methods they use to



seek answers to those questions. They also encourage further theological reflection, some of which scholars may look forward to in the second and third volumes of a promised trilogy, of which this is the first installment.

The eclectic approach in this volume has its upsides and its downsides. By placing a diverse array of methodological perspectives side by side, Padilla and Phan show how wide and open theological thinking about migration is. They also argue implicitly that thinkers in the field are well able to engage scholarship in a number of disciplines. For instance, representative chapters include a sociological discussion of migration and the rise of cities; thought about migration from Asian perspectives; Scriptural, philosophical, and phenomenological hermeneutics; possibilities for intercultural theological thought about migration; and even a discussion of graduate theological education in light of contemporary realities of migration. The work may likewise stimulate dialogue between scholars undertaking diverse projects in theology and migration: one who is interested in questions of how the experiences of migrants may reshape traditional theological categories may also find herself asking how she conducts graduate seminars, while one who studies migration to cities may begin asking new questions about the concept of “space” itself in an analysis of migration. However, the shape such dialogue might take is not clearly laid out in the volume, as the chapters at times appear simply to be set side by side, without much connecting them together thematically. Padilla and Phan recognize that they are “crafting not so much a new doctrinal system as a multifocal theology” (5), but even readers who are simply looking for shared themes will find they must make what is implicit, explicit – or simply accept that each chapter is quite different from the one before. Nevertheless, even collecting such diverse studies in one volume highlights global perspectives and intercultural methodologies which future work in theology of migration would do well to imitate, or at least to engage.

This particular work, as noted, focuses on Christian theology. Thus, it will provide insights for Christian scholars, as well as a window into

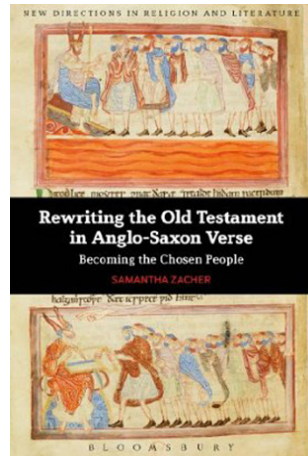
Christian thought for those who hope to work comparatively or promote interreligious dialogue around theological and religious analysis of contemporary migration. It must be said that within the North American academy, theology of migration has not yet seen a critical mass of scholarly works outside of the Christian tradition. More and more scholars of religion and theologians from the world's largest religious traditions are working on questions of migration, however, and indeed the second volume in Padilla and Phan's trilogy is titled *Theology of Migration in the Abrahamic Religions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), promising to feature reflections from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives. Still, those who are interested in the field may hope to hear more from scholars of other major world religions as well as indigenous religious traditions, and we may also hope that these scholars will find material for reflection and dialogue in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*.

This work is a step forward in scholarly studies of migration and theology. It does justice to the increased interest and diversity within an area of study whose borders are far from defined, and it sets the stage for future work. Future scholarship in theological and ethical thought on migration will benefit from the intercultural and interreligious dialogue the authors and editors of the volume are clearly pursuing, and while *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology* is itself far from systematic, it draws together important themes which Christian thinkers in particular will find useful as they work to deepen scholarly thought about theology and ethics of migration while remaining attentive to diverse perspectives.

Reviewed by Laura E. Alexander.

Ph.D. Candidate in Religious Ethics, University of Virginia

Samantha Zacher. *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People*. New Directions in Religion and Literature. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) ISBN 978-1-4411-8560-0, Pp. 189, \$30, paperback.



Old Testament imagery is deeply rooted in medieval Anglo-Saxon culture and history. The Anglo-Saxons in many ways saw themselves as imagined spiritual descendants of Israel, which was a fairly common medieval mentality. In this book, Zacher provides a detailed examination of just how medieval Old English Old Testament poems were written as theologico-political documents intended to reinforce this Anglo-Saxon spiritual and politically-motivated superimposition.

Zacher's introduction explains the goals and intentions of this book. She addresses three Old English, Old Testament poems: *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Judith*, due to the breadth in artistic and cultural responses to these canonical and deuterocanonical books. Anglo-Saxon culture developed a politico-theological approach of "divine election" (also called *replacement theology*), in which they believed themselves (i.e. the new Israel), to be called by God to invade England (i.e. Canaan), because of England's immorality. This notion of the Anglo-Saxons becoming the chosen people, the New Israel, was generated by the Venerable Bede who inherited this theologico-political superimposition from theologians of Late Antiquity such as Eusebius, Orosius, Salvian and Paulinus of Nola. Jewish election and covenantal relationship with God, presented a model to be both imitated and transcended simultaneously by the Anglo-Saxons. Each of the three chapters presents an example of Old Testament poetry through the lens of Anglo-Saxon political theology, which shall be described below.

In chapter one, Zacher examines the Anglo-Saxon poem *Exodus*, as an Anglo-Saxon theologico-political document which looks retrospectively on the chosen nation of Israel leaving Egypt and entering into the Promised Land, and portrays the German migration to Britain as its double. The *Exodus* poem employs Anglo-Saxon military language and war imagery to describe the tribes of Israel crossing the Red Sea, and in particular the tribes of Rueben and Judah. These two tribes are described as *flotan* and *saewicingas* (“sailors” and “sea Vikings” 331, 333) and all the Israelites are collectively called “spear troops” decorated with embossed shields and clad in iron (pp. 56-7) which are obvious superimpositions on the part of the Anglo-Saxon poet. Throughout this poem, the writer repeatedly refers to covenantal language, which was employed by Anglo-Saxon writer as a theologico-political literary tool, in order to superimpose the Anglo-Saxon race as God’s new covenantal community.

In chapter two, Zacher reveals that the Old English Old Testament poem of *Daniel* was also used as theologico-political support for Anglo-Saxon “divine election.” In the biblical book of *Daniel*, the large statue in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represents the succession of empires, ending eventually in a mysterious fifth empire yet to be determined, but one that would be an indestructible and spiritual successor to the kingdom of Israel. The central them of the Daniel poem is that this *translatio imperii* (“translation of power”) from ancient Babylon onward, eventuates in the translation electionis (“translation of election”) of the poet’s Christian Anglo-Saxon audience. The Anglo-Saxon poet of *Exodus* applies the concept of *translatio electionis* to the poem’s audience, in order to declare that they as Anglo-Saxon Christians have replaced the Jews as the special covenantal people of God, with included some anti-Semitic annotations referring the Jews’ disobedience and wickedness against God.

The third and final chapter is attributed to the Old English, Old Testament poem *Judith*. In this chapter, Zacher explores the development of Israelite animosity towards the enemies of God (i.e. the Assyrians in this poem) and associates this to the Anglo-Saxon’s impression of their

enemies. The Old English Anglo-Saxon poem *Judith*, serves as an object lesson for the concept of holy war (or Augustinian “just war”), that was certainly introduced from Anglo-Saxon writers through Augustinian theological influence. The poet rewrites and revises the biblical, and specifically Pentateuchal concept of holy war (Heb. *herem*) in order to make it coincide with patristic and medieval conceptions of Augustinian “just war” theory.

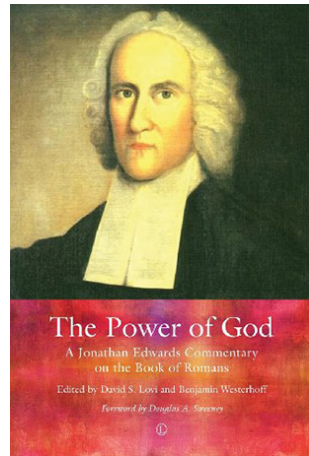
Zacher superbly illustrates the tremendous influence of theologico-political interpretation of Old Testament narratives upon Anglo-Saxon writing. This kind of reuse and revision of Old Testament narratives and deuterocanonical texts for theologico-political purposes was hardly unique to the medieval period, and has been sustained from Late Antiquity, through Colonial America. This type of interpretation creates significant sociological and anthropological hermeneutical concerns. However, scholars will continue to contextualize these narratives for theologico-political purposes in order to contextualize the Old Testament.

Zacher skillfully builds upon the scholarship of, while simultaneously offering criticism on both contemporary medievalists such as Malcolm Godden and Harold Bloom, as well as political theologians Carl Schmitt and Oliver O’Donovan. Zacher postulates that these Anglo-Saxon Old Testament poems are “strong translations” (as defined by Bloom) because they “radically reframe, change, and embellish them in order to give expression to new ideas” (xv) rather than simply being translated reproductions. As for Godden, Zacher expounds on his positing that the Old Testament narratives have greater appeal to an Anglo-Saxon audience than their New Testament counterparts because of shared thematic elements with the Germanic hero-ethos. Zacher employs O’Donovan’s *The Desire of Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* as a methodological guide, and Schmitt’s theologico-political philosophy as another, finding relevant information as well as offering critique on Schmitt’s theologico-political focus on National Socialism, employing his methodology upon medieval theologico-political writings instead.

Zacher provides an outstanding overview of the three Old English Old Testament poems: *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Judith*, and their theologico-political impact on Anglo-Saxon cultural and religious development. Zacher's book *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse*, is an important development in, and vibrant examination of the study of political theology.

Reviewed by, Blake Campbell, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago

David S. Lovi and Benjamin Westerhoff (Eds.) *The Power of God: A Jonathan Edwards Commentary on the Book of Romans*. Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2013. pb 402. ISBN: 978-0718893279, £22.5, \$39.6



This book is a compilation of excerpts from the writings of the eighteenth century pastor and Reformed theologian, Jonathan Edwards. Inspired by the lectures of the American scholar, John H. Gerstner (1914-1996), on the theology of Edwards, the book aims to “complete what Gerstner started: a major compilation of Edwards’ works in the book of Romans” (x).

Two reasons are offered for the choice of Edwards on Romans. First, the book of Romans was chosen in view of the contemporary relevance of its theological themes for evangelicalism, such as the themes of justification, God’s wrath, sin, Israel, predestination and the church. Second, Edwards was chosen because of his reputation and prolixity. Since Edwards is reputed to be “one of the greatest minds in American history, and one of

the greatest pastors” (xii), it is the editors’ hope that the book will be an invaluable resource for both pastors and scholars.

In order to achieve the above intent and objective, excerpts from a wide range of Edwards’ writings are gathered and arranged into two major sections. Entitled “commentary”, the first section is arranged according to the order of chapters and verses in the book of Romans (1-334). Sources employed here include Edwards’ miscellanies entries, published treatises, exegetical manuscripts, letters, and biographical work. The second section consists of Edwards’ exegetical comments drawn from his sermons and arranged according to the order of Romans under the heading, “Explications” (335-77). In the assessment of the editors, the book contains “almost everything Edwards has ever written” on Romans with the exception of “a very small amount of un-transcribed material” (xi). The book ends with a helpful subject index of ten pages (379-88).

Several comments are in order. First, there is currently no comparable work in the field of Edwards research on his treatment of the book of Romans. The most significant antecedent is a work indicated by Sweeney in the Foreword – a volume of Edwards’ sermons on Romans to be edited by Gerstner for Yale University Press but which was never completed (ix). As such, this book fills an obvious lacuna and Lovi and Westerhoff are to be congratulated for their efforts. Second, while the book is the first of its kind, readers should not conclude *ipso facto* that its contribution to Edwards research is significant. There are two major weaknesses that will need to be addressed if the book is to be of significant help to pastors and scholars as the editors intended.

The first weakness is the evident lack of contextual engagement with the writings of Edwards. There is hardly any attempt to locate Edwards within his historical and intellectual context. Did Edwards change his views on the interpretation of certain passages in Romans over time? Were his comments on certain passages informed by the social, theological, or ecclesiastical problems of his day? What were his exegetical principles? Did he stand within a particular commentarial tradition? What were his

exegetical sources for Romans? Since there is no critical introduction that discusses fundamental issues of context, or footnotes that refer to relevant material within the Edwards corpus and related scholarly studies, readers will be hard pressed for answers to the above questions.

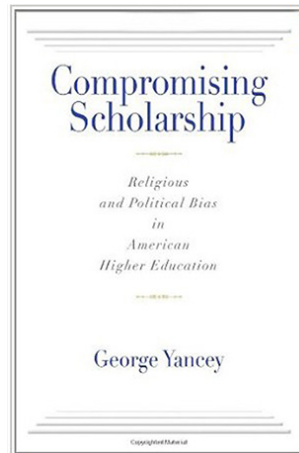
The second weakness has to do with editorial matters. It is puzzling that a book described as a “commentary on the book of Romans” does not contain commentary on a significant number of passages. For instance, fourteen verses are without commentary in Paul’s treatment of sin in the first three chapters of Romans, while comment for twenty verses are missing in Paul’s treatment of God’s salvific purposes for Jews and Gentiles in Romans 9-11. Did Edwards not discuss them or are they left out in the light of editorial decisions? Such a significant portion of missing comments warrants an explanation from the editors. Another curious feature that lacks editorial transparency is the separation of Edwards’ sermonic material (i.e. “Explications”) from the rest of his writings. This decision creates the unnecessary inconvenience for readers of having to go through the flow of Romans twice.

Finally, readers are to note that some content in the main text do not come from Edwards. The commentary for Romans 1:27, for instance, are the words of the editor, Stephen J. Stein, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 24, *The “Blank Bible”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 985n3. There is also no bibliography.

Lovi and Westerhoff have certainly produced a work whose collated material will be of significant interest to pastors and scholars of Edwards. However, the shortcomings are major ones. Unless they are addressed, it will be difficult for the book to achieve the aims for which it was conceived.

Reviewed by, Dr. Edwin Tay, Trinity Theological College, Singapore

George Yancey. *Compromising Scholarship: Religious and Political Bias in American Higher Education*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1602582682, 250+xiv pp. USD 33.57.



One long-standing accusation leveled at the field of higher education is that it is elitist, left-leaning politically, and hostile towards religion and faith. In *Compromising Scholarship: Religious and Political Bias in American Higher Education* George Yancey, a professor of Sociology at the University of North Texas, makes the argument that academia is biased against religious people and religious scholarship.

Yancey asserts that more academics identify as politically progressive than conservative. Second, he claims that politically and religiously conservative people are an oppressed minority within higher education. The former point is supported by outside data, but the latter is what he is really trying to prove through his research. In order to do so he draws correlations between Christian Evangelicals and Fundamentalists and groups that have historically experienced oppression and disenfranchisement, such as women and racial minorities.

Yancey argues that liberal academics are fighting a culture war against conservatives, and that this has caused a bias, conscious or not, particularly against religiously conservative people. He asserts that this bias is influencing the type of scholarship that is being done, particularly in the physical sciences. “Scientific knowledge that promotes the interests of favored social groups, such as the ACLU and Democratic Party, may be encouraged as the needs and interest of members of these groups gain special favor among scholars,” he writes. “On the other hand, academics

may possess little interest in addressing the interests or concerns of disfavored groups.” (150)

Yancey utilizes both an anonymous survey of academics and the online blogs of sociologists to explore whether there is a liberal bias within higher education. As a professor of Sociology Yancey focuses his inquiry on that field, and tries to generalize his findings to other disciplines using the data he collects. His survey had a response rate of 29%, or 439 respondents. Yancey presents his survey under the umbrella of exploring collegiality, but with the intent to ascertain whether or not there is a bias in hiring practices. He astutely points out that it would be very difficult to get people to admit to any sort of bias when it comes to hiring, and thus he attempts to get around that by disguising his survey.

Although he does ask about hiring, because he has framed this as a survey about collegiality there is an emphasis on who his respondents would most like to work with, rather than whom they would hire when sitting on a hiring committee. This may seem like a small distinction, but is actually significant. While people may have strong preferences about who they would prefer to work with, those preferences do not necessarily lead to a bias against hiring people from groups that are not strongly preferred.

The biggest problem with Yancey’s argument is that he does not allow for any sort of intersectional approach to understanding power and oppression. While it may be true that those who identify as religious or social conservatives are underrepresented in academia, that does not necessarily equate to oppression. Had Yancey utilized the theory of intersectionality, in which a person can be privileged in one context and oppressed in another, he would have been able to make a stronger case. However, trying to make a one to one correlation between the underrepresentation of conservatives in academia and the systematic exploitation and oppression of racial minorities, without looking at wider societal conditions, results in an argument that feels underdeveloped.

While there is an argument to be made that there is an underrepresentation of conservative voices in mainstream academia,

Yancey does not take in to account other possible causes for the imbalance, such as self-selecting by conservatives out of academia. By addressing only one possible cause he limits the scope and effect of his argument. It is worthwhile to explore possible biases within mainstream academics. Unfortunately Yancey's argument falls short. Had he utilized an intersectional approach in his scholarship his argument would have been more nuanced and effective.

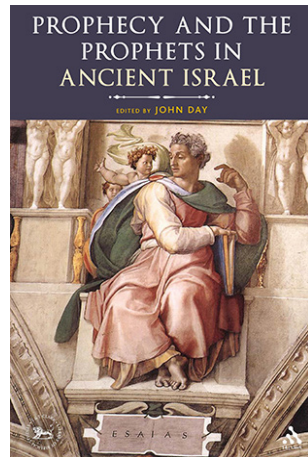
Reviewed by, Kathryn Sargent,
Ph.D. Student, Claremont Graduate University

John Day. *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014 (ISBN #:978-0567299369).

This volume edited by John Day consists of twenty-three essays originally delivered as papers to the Oxford Old Testament seminar between Jan. 2006-Oct. 2008.

These essays offer a major contribution to the study of prophecy and the prophets in ancient Israel ranging from the earliest history of the ancient near East, to the Old Testament, and leading up to the beginning of the New Testament time period. These essays have been revised and expanded since, and the collection is the product of a global academic effort.

This work consists of four parts. Part I covers the ancient near Eastern context of prophecy which offers a historical and cultural foundation for



later prophecy in ancient Israel. Part II addresses specific prophetic themes such as the concept of the prophetess within the Hebrew Bible, and the ideas of interpersonal forgiveness within the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Part III views prophecy and the prophets through sociological, anthropological and psychological perspectives. Part IV concentrates on prophecy and prophets in specific biblical books.

Part I describes the ancient Near Eastern cultural context of prophecy in ancient Israel and the Old Testament. The very first essay by Martti Nissinen provides a comparison of extrabiblical and ancient Hebrew prophetic sources. Ancient Israelite prophecy is but a part (albeit distinctive in its own right) of a larger picture of a prophetic tradition within the Ancient Near East. The similarities between the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible and extrabiblical prophetic writings are evident, in particular the book of Amos and the Assyrian oracle of Bayâ. In the book of Amos “the relationship between Amaziah, Amos and Jeroboam corresponds well with what we know about the relationship between priests, prophets and kings,” in many other Near Eastern prophetic documents (Nissinen, 13). Nissinen also traces the condition of prophecy in the post-monarchical period of Israel’s history, noting the strong Babylonian influences upon Israelite prophecy.

Part II consists of two essays on specific themes of prophecy—the first being the prophetess in the Hebrew Bible, and the second being the concept of interpersonal forgiveness in the Hebrew prophets. In the fourth essay, H.G.M. Williamson indicates that there are “five references to individual prophetesses in the Hebrew Bible,” which interestingly the Talmud lists seven, of which only three correspond with those mentioned unequivocally in the Hebrew Bible (Williamson, 65). Williamson presents the first prophetess as Noadiah, who is mentioned as challenging Nehemiah’s building campaign (Neh.6:14). The second prophetess is Moses’ sister Miriam. The third prophetess is Deborah the judge of Israel, of whom Williamson argues can and should be categorized as a prophetess and argues such from textual evidence found in Judges 4, although

contends that “it is not clearly phrased in such a way as to compel that title” (Williamson, 69). However, according to Williamson, it remains clear that written prophecy remains a male preserve.

Part III provides an overview of the prophetic books and the biblical topic of prophecy from a sociological, anthropological and psychological perspective. Prophecy is reexamined in light of former social criticism within prophetic scholarship to properly understand prophecy in an accurate sociological environment within ancient Israel. The Israelite prophets are compared to parallel forms of prophecy, such as that of shamans and spirit mediums, found in extrabiblical Near Eastern cultural and religious milieus. Israelite prophecy is scrutinized under psychological interpretation as well.

Finally Part IV reviews prophecy and prophetic tradition within specific Old Testament books. This is the largest part of the book. It begins with prophecy in Deuteronomy, which “devotes more attention to prophecy—its foundation at Horeb/Sinai, its purpose, and its potential for abuse—than to any other national institution or office, including even kingship” (Day, 151). The coverage extends through the Minor Prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Malachi and Zephaniah, through the Major Prophets such as Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah, and up to the introduction of prophecy in the New Testament.

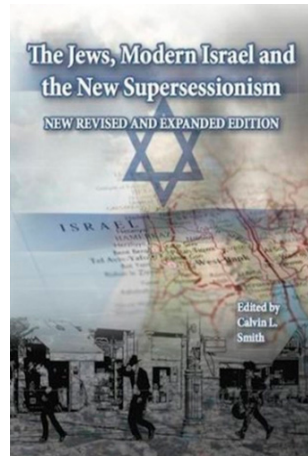
John Collins’ essay “The Sign of Immanuel” in Part IV, offers a prophetic challenge to traditional evangelical theology. Collins contends that “it behooves anyone with an interest in messianism or Christology to try to sort out its original intention and early interpretation,” arguing that the text needs to be read in its original literary and historical context (Collins, 225). Collins argues through prophetic and textual evidence that the “prophecy” of Immanuel does not point to the coming messiah, but has real implications for King Ahaz during whose reign this prophecy was spoken. According to Collins, Isaiah initial message to Ahaz was one of reassurance which is entirely plausible given the politico-historical context of the Syro-Ephraimite war. Moreover, Isa. 7:1 corresponds closely

to 2 Kgs. 16 which includes a narrative about Hezekiah, pointing perhaps to a prophetic connection.

Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar edited by the prominent scholar John Day, delivers a diverse examination of prophecy in ancient Israel. This work is a part of the Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies formerly known as the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, which consists of works of similar scholarly focus and inquiry into more infrequently discussed topics in Old Testament scholarship. The authors of this work provide rich multi-disciplined discourse on a critical element of Old Testament scholarship—Hebrew prophecy and Israelite prophets within the history of the prophetic tradition—often regrettably overlooked in historical and contemporary scholarship. The contributing authors write in somewhat of an erudite manner, making this work suitable mainly for scholarly purposes and pursuits. Many topics in these essays have been left out of modern day scholarship whether for deficiency of knowledge, or scarcity in resources. However, the participating scholars bring rarely discussed topics of prophecy and the prophetic tradition to the forefront of Old Testament scholarship.

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Calvin L. Smith. *The Jews, Modern Israel and the New Supersessionism*
Kent, United Kingdom: King's
Divinity Press, 2013. Pp. 290. Paper.
ISBN 13: 978-0-9562006-1-7



False representations, crude caricatures, and monolithic portrayals of Israel and pro-Israel Christians lacking nuance and objectivity are the things that Smith seeks to rebalance in his second edition of *The Jews, Modern Israel and the New Supersessionism*. With six new essays, several essays reworked and material from the first edition re-visited and updated, the book is internally coherent, multi-disciplinary and focused in its overarching aim, (loc.463). The introduction effectively sets out the books fourteen chapters and three divisions, also offering the reader a definition of the new Supersessionism as follows: a political agenda where the theology is made to fit, not vice versa, (loc.402). This second edition exuberates nuance, assisting the reader to reflect honestly and objectively upon Israel historically, contemporarily and eschatologically, (loc.4984). The book's contributors come from across the Evangelical theological spectrum, therefore the disingenuous claim that all non-Supersessionists are a narrow minded, peripheral and fanatical segment of the church is undermined (loc.449).

The book is aimed at the lay Christian to supplement a scarcity of resources available to the non-theologically trained (loc.432), nevertheless, this collection of scholarly essays exhibits anything but straw man arguments proof texting and Christian Zionist rhetoric. Rather, Smith aims for the middle ground between what has been a highly polarized and at times tumultuous topic, neither idealizing nor demonizing Israel, but portraying God's faithfulness to Israel, (loc.295). Smith takes this approach as he believes that triumphalist Supersessionism harms evangelistic

endeavors to the Jewish people, not only undermining the continuing relevance of the gospel for Jews but also delegitimizing a manifestly Jewish form of Christianity. Smith then seeks to differentiate between hardline or punitive Supersessionism and soft or economic Supersessionism; he rejects the notion of Israel being sinless, rejects two ways of salvation i.e. one for gentiles and one for Jews; and rejects an Israel right or wrong approach but equally rejects an Israel always wrong approach. Smith also rejects that God loves Jews more than Arabs, and therefore highlights the importance of distinguishing between corporate Israel and individual Jews and Arabs. Smith in taking this middle ground approach rejects the apartheid language so often used to describe Israel's action toward Arabs, showing this not to be the case and eschewing the pejorative nature of the current debate regarding Supersessionism. Smith believes a lot more nuance is needed in this discussion, challenging stereotypical attitudes which tar all non Supersessionists with the same brush. Such stereotypical attitudes Smith believes fail to differentiate between various non Supersessionist theological positions because they are often rooted in biblical illiteracy, though Smith does believe that there are problems of biblical illiteracy in both Supersessionist and non-Supersessionist camps. Throughout this revised edition it is clear that Smith does not make one's position on Israel a test of orthodoxy, however he does view it as an important issue and one which deserves honest reflection and careful thought and analysis.

In the first division Maltz illustrates how the early church fathers e.g. Justin Martyr (135AD) saw no danger as they sought to construct a Platonic Christian worldview, for purposes of evangelism and fueled by anti-Semitism, (loc.645). Horner builds upon Maltz theological platform showing the uninterrupted line of Jewish church leadership until 135AD when the Romans prohibited Jewry, also demonstrating the parallel trajectories of Supersessionism and non-literal interpretations of Scripture, (loc.1018). Chapter two finishes with a good example of Augustine's eisegetical and arbitrary interpretation of Ps.59.11, associated with Neo-Platonism and a more allegorical interpretative approach, (loc.1188). All of this may challenge

the ordinary and untrained Christian reader to reexamine their Bible to avoid eisegetical interpretations based on a Platonic dualistic Christian worldview, inherited from an anti-Semitic biblical interpretative tradition, (loc.660, 752). In ch.3 most readers will be left disturbed as Barnes describes how reformers like Martin Luther instigated violence toward the Jews, and how Germany's churches supported and praised religiously motivated anti-Semitic laws, (loc.1396). At this stage of the book the powerful realization is reached that Supersessionism is more than ivory tower theorizing, but has had horrific implications in the lives of millions of Jews, (loc.1442-1464). In ch.4 Wilkinson brings the first ray of hope when the UK church after much post holocaust theological reflection helped reestablish the nation of Israel in 1948, through key influential people, (1890).

The second division investigates Supersessionism in light of the Bible.

Cheung explains throughout ch.5 the recent move by scholars toward the view that the "Israel" of Rom.11:26 refer to ethnic Israel, thus remaining consistent with its usage elsewhere in the book, (loc.2252). In ch.6 Diprose critiques economic Supersessionism and also examines a key verse employed to support punitive Supersessionism (John 8:30-47), without which the arguments supporting punitive Supersessionism would be groundless, (loc.2489). Diprose also discusses the nature and scope of Galatians 3:26-29, highlighting its soteriological not Supersessionist context (loc.2606). I found particularly useful the chapter on Apostolic Jewish Christian hermeneutics and Supersessionism by Prasch contrasting the westernized dualistic either / or approach, against the more holistic Jewish Christian hermeneutical approach. Smith in the third division throughout ch.13 presents the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as complex and far from homogenous, undermining straw man arguments presenting Arab Christians as monolithically anti-Israel, or blanket claims of the Israeli government protecting or persecuting Christians among other points. Ch.14 ends with Taylor's somber warning to the church that it has a responsibility in the way it witnesses to the Jews and the nation of Israel, in the same way that it is responsible to accurately represent Christ to any other people group, (loc.5237).

Cheung's very effective and coherent essay should nullify any reservations that Rom.11:26 refers to anything other than ethnic Israel, nevertheless, Andy could have elaborated more upon the use of the term Israel in 1 Corinthians 10:18. The historical survey in section one is an excellent primer to the subject, as was the second division examining the subject from a biblical point of view. However, most contemporary Supersessionists disassociate themselves from such anti-Semitic traditions, and see no discord between Supersessionism and Philo-Semitism. Therefore, a response to the likes of N.T. Wright's views on modern Israel would have been beneficial. N.T. Wright also interprets Israel from an Christological perspective and argues not only from Romans and Galatians but also from Hebrews, from a covenantal perspective charging pro-Israel Christians with heresy. In this respect Smith could have provided a defense of why one's position on Israel isn't a test of orthodoxy, as a response to Wright. Finally, Smith contributed a most excellent chapter regarding modern Israel and Israeli politics leaving the reader doubtless as to the necessity of a more nuanced approach to this topic. However, as contemporary non-Supersessionist arguments revolve around social justice, more may have been said in this respect, e.g. many immigrants to Israel in 1948 were homeless, and those Jews who attempted to return to post holocaust Europe found themselves unwelcome. Notwithstanding the many Jews ejected from Arab countries in 1948 that were dispossessed and sent into exile, despite many of them wishing to stay in their countries of origin. Therefore the twin-tale of tragedy for Jews and Arabs resulting from the establishment of Israel in 1948 could have been introduced and elaborated upon as an issue of social injustice, as it affected both Jews and Arabs.

This second edition is a valuable resource to the Evangelical community to contribute to the scarcity of resources dealing with Supersessionism. Furthermore, it is effectively pitched for the layman only very infrequently assuming familiarity with theological jargon, e.g. words like Semi-Pelagianism, (loc.1054) and soteriological, (loc.2382).

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