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Baptists Supporting Christians in the Academy: A Personal Perspective

ABSTRACT

In the New Zealand context, where anti-intellectualism is a deeply embedded attitude, ministry to the academy faces particular challenges. Yet the University clearly remains a setting of great significance. The first part of this essay reviews a number of calls for thoroughly Christian scholarship. How are these to relate to the ministry of churches? How are we to encourage what Bartholmew and Goheen describe as ‘integrally Christian scholarship’? I suggest that a path forward may be found through recent explorations of the theology of work. The second part of the essay notes various approaches and metaphors for this task. It then suggests a range of strategies by which churches may equip Christians to inhabit the academy more confidently.

Webster and Perry’s analysis of the New Zealand Values Survey data in 1989 demonstrated that Baptists exceeded all other major denominations in advanced education or training and were only surpassed by people in the No Religion category.¹ This raises the question as to how best Baptist churches might support both students and staff in the Academy.

Anti-intellectualism in Aotearoa.

One major challenge in New Zealand is affirming the worth of academic pursuits in a culture that has a pronounced anti-intellectual bias. Even that most widely consulted source of wisdom Wikipedia, includes ‘anti-intellectualism’ as a major subheading in its article on the Culture of New Zealand.² Perhaps more convincingly, this was also the conclusion of historian Michael King after writing his *Penguin History of New Zealand*. King

¹ Alan C. Webster and Paul E. Perry, *The Religious Factor in New Zealand Society* (Palmerston North:Alpha, 1989), 29-30.

² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_New_Zealand#Anti-intellectualism

maintained that New Zealanders as a whole have shown very little interest in the ideologies that others have brought from overseas and sought to promote in New Zealand. Ideas that in other places have been considered exciting for their own sake and become part of public discourse have usually failed to gain currency in New Zealand: 'New Zealanders at all levels have proved themselves to be pragmatists and only interested in reorganising society in very specific ways that would give them immediate benefits, and the ideologues had no role there.'³ There is widespread cynicism about the worth of academic study unless it is clearly vocationally orientated and working towards economic advantage. It is not uncommon to hear the opinions of scholars dismissed with disparaging remarks such as, 'Oh you can forget that, he's just one of those academics!'

Bill Pearson expressed a similar concern in writing about the way New Zealanders fail to encourage the work of artists in his 'Fretful Sleepers' article in *Landfall* in 1952.⁴ Pearson saw this as the result of both an intellectual and religious failure that fostered a climate of fear and insecurity and stifled intellectual and artistic creativity by demanding conformity. The world Pearson describes in 1952 has changed in many ways.⁵ Diversity and creativity may be valued more now, but intellectual life and artistic creativity are still not easy vocations to pursue in a culture where practical concerns and economic returns are prioritised over aesthetic and metaphysical concerns.

Learning to love God with our Minds

This national anti-intellectualism presents a particular problem for Baptist churches in New Zealand. In part this is because evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches in New Zealand have often grown through attracting into their membership Christians reacting against the liberal theology of academics in other mainstream denominations. As a result learning, at least at the popular level, has often been despised or even worse is seen to be more of an obstacle to faith rather than a help. Stories abound of people who have gone to theological college only to lose their

³ Michael King in Laurence Simmons, *Speaking Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals Rethink New Zealand* (Auckland:AUP, 2007), 176-177.

⁴ Bill Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers : a sketch of New Zealand behaviour and its implications for the artist.' *Landfall* 23.6; Sept (1952), 201-230.

⁵ For some thoughtful analysis of this see Peter Simpson's essay 'Bill Pearson's New Zealand Then and Now' in *Landfall* 194, Spring (1997) 203-222.

faith; or of ministers who can no longer talk the language of the people because theological training has left them relating to another academic world that is detached from 'the real world'. The rapid proliferation of churches that appeal to a younger generation of believers in New Zealand has generally been accompanied by a strong emphasis on the priority of religious experience over Christian beliefs or, alternatively, adherence to some narrowly-defined Christian orthodoxy that must not be questioned. What Mark Noll said about the scandal of the evangelical mind in America is probably true for many younger New Zealand Christians: 'The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind. Evangelicals exhibit a lot of enthusiasm and compassion and courage and many other virtues but they have also failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life.'⁶

James Davison Hunter suggests that evangelical scholars are 'doubly marginalized': 'Marginalized from the larger intellectual culture, especially to the extent that they pursue Christian distinctions in their work, yet they are also marginalized within Evangelicalism because of this community's long-standing tradition of anti-intellectualism.'⁷ This underlines the need for good support networks and resources for Christian scholars.

Developing Thoroughly Christian minds

Helping Christians to develop more inquisitive and creative and rigorous and robust Christian minds is a challenge. Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, in their book 'The Transforming Vision', sound this warning: 'The problem isn't that the Christian community is lacking in doctors, farmers, business people and musicians. The problem is that there are so few Christian doctors, farmers, business people and musicians. Most of us are Christians and something else; we do not engage in our daily tasks integrally as Christians ... Well-meaning Christians are merely adding faith to their vocation rather than letting faith transform their vocation.'

Tom Sine suggests something very similar when he says 'For all the talk about the Lordship of Jesus, the real message to young Christians is: get your career underway, get your lifestyle going, and then with whatever you have left over, follow Jesus.'

⁶ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans 1994), 3-4.

⁷ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York:Oxford Uni Press, 2010), 86.

It is a different vision that lies behind the writing of this paper; the glimpse of churches that encourage Christian academics who are not only adding faith to their vocation but letting their faith transform their vocation through the development of truly Christian minds.

The focus on developing a Christian mind through the adoption of a Christian worldview has proved very popular recently. Most often this approach follows the pattern of creation, the fall, redemption and the end. These are used like four different lenses through which any subject might be viewed to gain a more fully rounded biblical perspective.⁸ In this way, it is said, we may catch a glimpse of the good, the bad, the better and the perfect as portrayed in Scripture. Part of the attraction is undoubtedly the adoption of such a simple structure. But also a structure that fits well with some essential elements that shape the Bible narrative. However some of the limitations of this approach are also being examined currently and more nuanced approaches developed in the course of an ongoing lively debate.⁹

Study is about more than just learning other people's thoughts so we can repeat them to pass exams. It is about discovering how God's world works. It is about developing a Christian mind and world view and learning to think Christianly. Students need to be challenged to think about 'How much better equipped would you be to live as a Christian in the world, if you applied the same effort to understand your faith as you are to understanding your studies?' Jesus calls us to love God with our minds, as well as the rest of our being. Arthur Holmes asserts 'To shape a Christian mind is to shape the history of the church in today's and tomorrow's world. To shape the church's influence is to shape history

⁸ Three influential exponents of this approach are John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984,1990), 34-35; Albert Wolters *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985,2005) and Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999).

⁹For some of the key participants in this debate see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Andy Crouch *Culture Making* (Downers Grove:IVP, 2008); Kevin Vanhoozer, 'What is Everyday Theology?' in chapter 2 of Vanhoozer, Kevin J et al. *Everyday Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007),15-60; and James Davison Hunter *To Change the World* (New York: OUP, 2010). Other more anthropological discussions of worldview include Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) and Charles Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008).

itself. If there is anything at all to the adage that ideas shape history, it is also true that God shapes history through capturing the mind for Christ'.¹⁰

The Strategic Significance of the University for Christian Involvement.

Even in a culture cynical about academic enterprise a disproportionate number of leaders and shapers of public opinion and institutions will have passed through our universities. It is Charles Malik, the Lebanese philosopher and former president of the United Nations, who has stated the case for Christian concern about what happens in universities most strongly, 'How to order the mind on sound Christian principles at the very heart of where it is formed and informed, namely in the universities, is one of the two greatest themes that can be considered....The problem is not only to win souls but to save minds. If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world. Indeed it may turn out that you have actually lost the world.'¹¹ From Malik's point of view Western universities exercise more influence in the world than all other institutions and 'No task is more crucial and urgent today than to examine the state of mind and spirit of the Western university.'¹² Some might consider Malik's judgements to be overstated. Nevertheless, his sense of the strategic role that universities play in the world is compelling. And churches supporting Christians in the academy need a similar sense of the strategic importance of this ministry.

Yet the track record of our churches and ministries is poor. John Stackhouse wonders, 'why is the intellect not even valued in campus missions?... Why is so little premium placed on having genuine intellectual experts as speakers?...Why so few university professors, rather than popular writers and 'pop pastors?'' The result, according to Stackhouse, is usually some arrogant amateurism rather than a convincing connection between scholarship and the communication of the faith.¹³ It is essential to

¹⁰ Arthur F. Holmes, *The Making of a Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, IL:IVP, 1985), 136.

¹¹ Charles Habib Malik, 'The Two Tasks' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 23/4 (December 1980), 295.

¹² Charles Habib Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University* (Downers Grove IL:IVP 1982), 19-20.

¹³ Stackhouse, John G. *Engaging the University: The Vocation of Campus Ministry*. A conference address. (Toronto, 2007). <http://stackblog.wordpress.com/engaging-the-university/> (Accessed October 2010).

expose both students and academics alike to Christian scholars who combine inquiring and astute Christian minds with a lively spirituality.

The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship

George Marsden in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* maintains that genuine Christian scholarship is rare because Christian scholars have generally been trained to keep their Christian beliefs private as the price of their acceptance into the academic community. Graduate students find that the way they express their beliefs must be tailored to fit the modern humanistic worldview or else their scholarship will not be taken seriously. Authentic Christian scholarship is ‘outrageous’, Marsden argues, because it defies this notion and declares that the gospel has a formative role in scholarship.¹⁴

Goheen and Bartholomew echo this concern: ‘We are always aware that while, on the one hand, much true insight into God’s world will come to us from the non-Christian academic community, on the other hand the idolatry that underlies Western scholarship will also work to distort that insight.’¹⁵ However, they are also concerned to make plain that they are not suggesting that a naïve biblicism is any more the answer than some sophisticated dualism.

They suggest three positive ways that Scripture can function in scholarship as we seek to take seriously the cultural distance between the biblical world and the modern world.

1. Scripture offers the true story in which we find the meaning of our lives and the calling by which we carry out our academic tasks.
2. The biblical story may be articulated in terms of a worldview where the categories of creation, fall and redemption are elaborated with respect to their significance for scholarly endeavours.

¹⁴ George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 163.

3. Scripture can help to reveal various themes and norms that can guide the scholar.¹⁶

“There must be an inner connection between the Gospel and scholarship....Since faith will always shape scholarship, we strive to bring Scripture’s teaching to bear in a formative way on theoretical work, (1) critiquing foundational assumptions that are idolatrous while (2) acknowledging legitimate insight into the creation, and (3) relocating such insight within a Christian framework of thought. In all these ways—by positioning ourselves against the ideologies of the age, by affirming the genuine insights of non-Christian scholarship and by working in faith toward the goal of integrally Christian scholarship—we seek to witness to the victory of Christ on the cross, by which we can be set free from idolatry and enabled to live more and more in the new world of the kingdom of God.”¹⁷

The Theology of Work and the Work of Christian Scholars

A major challenge for churches supporting Christians in the academy in New Zealand lies in asserting the importance of developing our minds as an essential spiritual exercise. If we are to do this it will be essential to establish the link between faith and work.

People begin exploring the integration of their faith and work for different reasons. David Miller’s research identifies four dilemmas that get people thinking about how their faith and work are connected: Evangelism, Ethics, Experience (looking for spiritual meaning in work) and Enrichment (looking for spiritual nourishment at work). Miller pictures these as four quadrants in his so-called ‘Integration Box’.¹⁸ Outside this ‘Box’ faith and work are disconnected. Inside the ‘Box’, one quadrant may be the initial concern that gets a person started in the process of seeking a more holistic integration of faith and work, but they may also go on to explore some of the other dimensions of integration over time. Hence churches wanting to support Christians at work need to be aware that different approaches are required to connect with the needs of people at

¹⁶ Goheen and Bartholomew, *ibid.* 163-165.

¹⁷ ‘The Cross and Our Calling’, Redeemer University College, www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/Cross&Calling.pdf

¹⁸ David Miller, *God at Work*, 125- 142.

different starting points.¹⁹ Moreover a holistic approach should probably include all four dimensions.

The heading for this section is the title of a paper by Donald Griesinger, Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Claremont Graduate School, based on his observation that Christian scholars are often unclear about how their faith relates to their academic discipline and the extent to which their own faith walk should be expected to support and inform their scholarly work, if at all.²⁰ Griesinger, drawing on the work of Miroslav Volf, asserts that the creative work of scholars is intended by God to be done under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in view of Christ's coming kingdom. Of course this is not unique to Christian scholars, but rather the mission of the whole church of which scholars are a part. As such, Christian scholarship may connect with the mission of the church in many ways as part of the ongoing creative and transforming work of God in the world. In particular, through the quest for truth and deeper understanding of God's world, God's word and God's ways, the church can be a more faithful witness to a troubled world. As Clark Pinnock says, 'God touches the world when the church speaks the truth, proclaims good news, performs Jesus-actions, identifies with pain, builds community, shares and forgives'.²¹ Other scholars emphasise the importance of seeing our work as a participation in the work of all three members of the Holy Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit, in Creation, Redemption and the New Creation.²² Churches supporting Christians in the academy will develop a theology of work that helps both students and scholars to make sense of their work.²³

¹⁹ Miller *ibid.* 76-77.

²⁰ Donald W. Griesinger, *Christian Scholar's Review* Vol. 39, Iss. 3 (Holland: 2010), 291-304.

²¹ Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove IL:IVP, 1996), 141.

²² See Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1999), 71-130. Also Gordon Preece in *Marketplace Ministry* edited by Timothy Liu, Gordon Preece and Wong Siew Li. (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005), Chapter 3 online at http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP40_IG11.pdf Also Gordon Preece in *Faith Goes to Work* edited by Robert Banks. (New York:Alban Institute, 1993), 160-170.

²³ One fine example of a scholar articulating a clear and concise theology of work and world-changing in just 3 paragraphs, is found on the very first page of James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York:Oxford Uni Press, 2010), 3.

Churches Supporting Christians at Work

Elsewhere I have traced the development of a growing interest in the relationship between faith and work around the world and in particular noted some of the common characteristics of churches in Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand that have developed specific strategies for supporting Christians at work.²⁴ I don't want to repeat the findings of these papers here, except as they relate more specifically to Christians in the academy. But what I found that may have relevance for this discussion is that churches that are involved in supporting Christians in their work generally exhibit three common concerns:

1. They have a strong missional orientation and have begun to develop a theology that supports this. For a significant minority of these churches this interest is focussed primarily on the workplace as a place for evangelism. These churches do not necessarily see the work people do as of real significance in itself. However, the majority of other churches that have developed an interest in ministry in daily life have begun to develop a theology of mission that embraces both evangelism and the work itself as an opportunity for involvement in the mission of God.
2. They have a view of church that extends to what the people of God do beyond the life of the gathered community. They have started to reshape their gatherings and reorder their priorities and budgets to reflect this concern to see Christians equipped and commissioned and supported for ministry in daily life.
3. Most of these churches have also begun to develop a theology of work. And the most significant shift that has taken place generally is the development of a creation theology to accompany their previous emphasis on importance of redemption²⁵. However, in my experience, very few of these churches have developed a

²⁴ See Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work* (Melbourne:Zadok Institute, 2009)

²⁵ It is important to note here that the majority of churches that I looked at represented evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal backgrounds, hence the significance of this shift in theology.

significant public theology, or theology of social and cultural transformation integrated with their theology of work.²⁶

Christ and Culture

Richard Niebuhr's categories for defining the relationship between *Christ and Culture* (Christ against Culture, Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox and Christ Transforming Culture)²⁷ have been a target for criticism in some Christian circles.²⁸ However other scholars continue to use Niebuhr-like categories in ways which many students and academics have found helpful. For example Robert Webber compares the Separational, Identificational and Transformational models and then introduces us to his Incarnational model which combines all three. For Webber, 'No one model adequately describes the relationship of the Christian to society; on the other hand, each of the models provides an insight into a facet of Christian social responsibility...In Jesus God entered into human history and life and through his person and work modelled the relationship that His body the church is to express to the world. He identified with the world; was separate from the ideologies that rule it; and by His death, resurrection, and second coming assured its transformation'.²⁹

Webber's approach emphasises that there is no single way for Christians to fulfil their social tasks. Nor can we do this by just adopting one model, because no one model is so complete in itself that it doesn't also contain the others anyway. All three operate all the time to some extent. The question is how discerning are we being about the extent to which Jesus is calling us to emphasise the necessity for separation, or identification, or transformation with regard to particular issues?

²⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York is one exception, because of the theology of cultural transformation that comes from its Reformed background. See <http://www.redeemer2.com/visioncampaign/index.cfm?page=papers>

²⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York:Harper and Row, 1951)

²⁸ See for example D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2008); Glen H. Stassen, D.M. Yeager and John Howard Yoder (eds), *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* (Nashville:Abingdon, 1995), 6; and Craig Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Brazos Press, 2006).

²⁹ Robert E. Webber, *The Secular Saint: The Role of the Christian in the Secular World* (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1979), 188.

‘Ports of Entry’

When it comes to developing Christian approaches to particular academic disciplines, Arthur Holmes encourages us identify ‘ports of entry’ that are readily accessible. He suggests four particular starting points.³⁰ These include:

- **Historical Precedents:** There is already a long history of Christian involvement in most areas of study and our best starting point is to read those who have already travelled the road we are now walking.
- **Theoretical Foundations:** We need to examine and understand the philosophical beliefs and values that have shaped academic endeavour in the area we are studying. How does this fit with our Christian world view and Christian values? Has a Christian philosophy been developed to work out the implications of Christian belief in this area?
- **Ethical Issues:** Most areas of research and professional practice involve moral problems from time to time. Developing a Christian mind should include ethical sensitivity and astute reflection on moral dilemmas.
- **Mandates and Priorities:** Christians may get involved in any morally legitimate human endeavour, however Christian values will also urge us to prioritise some endeavours over others in a way that may run counter to prevailing priorities in our academic discipline or society at large. We need to examine and critique the values that are shaping the development of our particular discipline.

Useful Analogies

In their exploration of the relationship between sociology and Christian faith David Fraser and Tony Campolo illustrate what this process can look like with a number of imaginative analogies.³¹ These include:

³⁰ Arthur Holmes (ed.), *The Making of a Christian Mind* (Downers Grove:IVP, 1985), 133-136.

³¹ David A Fraser and Tony Campolo, *Sociology Through the Eyes of Faith* (Leicester:Apollos IVP, 1992).

- Planning an intercultural, interreligious wedding: People coming from quite different backgrounds have to learn to cooperate and get along, or call off the wedding.
- Gladiatorial Contest: This is where each side says ‘the only truth that exists belongs to me. All others must submit to me.’ Each competitor fights to force the other to submit.
- The Freezer Treatment: As you begin to enter into a new area of study many issues arise which can’t easily be incorporated into our existing world view. You may choose to store some of the questions and contradictory evidence in an intellectual refrigerator until a recipe can be found for deciding how these are incorporated into your overall thinking.
- The Tossed Salad: This all depends on which particular mixture of faith and learning ingredients a particular academic chooses to toss into the bowl. These may involve development of systematic recipes or more spontaneous creative mixtures.

Fraser and Campolo go further, suggesting some strategies for relating faith and learning, including:

- The Horse and Carriage Model: Recognising that faith and learning are complementary yet clearly distinct matters. The objects of study for theology and your discipline are often quite different and they also offer quite different angles of vision on the area of study. But differences don’t have to mean deficiency. Like a horse and carriage, if hitched together properly, faith and learning can assist each other to achieve together what neither of them can accomplish alone thereby enhancing each other. The differences may be explained in terms of division of labour, levels of analysis, or a more dialectical link.
- The Somebody’s-Got-to-Be-in-Charge Position: Apparent conflicts can only be resolved by either faith or learning being the paramount partner with the power of veto.
- A Partnership for Truth: This view sees faith and learning as dialogue partners in a long term conversation. There is no automatic conclusion that conflict will be resolved in favour of one or the other. All the terms of the relationship can’t be settled up front.

Fraser and Campolo acknowledge that there are a variety of possible ways of relating faith and learning. They do not advocate the mortal combat approach, nor an idiosyncratic approach just drawing on the personal preference of particular scholars. They commend the flexibility of the partnership model which also keeps open the possibility of several of the other strategies in service of the search for truth.

Either by using authors like Campolo and Fraser, or by getting local academics to share their own stories, churches can expose students and teachers alike to different models for relating faith and study. These can then be used as a basis for discussion to help students move towards understandings they can own for themselves.

Strategies for Engagement

Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York carries this mission statement as the lead banner on its website: 'Redeemer Presbyterian Church: Seeking to renew the city Socially, Spiritually, and Culturally'.³² Their Centre for Faith and Work, headed up by businesswoman Katherine Leary, aims to be 'the cultural renewal arm of the Redeemer movement, founded to equip, connect and mobilize leaders in their professional and industry spheres toward gospel-centred transformation for the common good.' They compare their approach to those of churches who adopt conversionist (change through personal conversions), political (change through Christian political power) and separatist (the witness of a distinctive Christian subculture) approaches. While each has its merits, and Redeemer includes elements of each of these in its overall approach, ultimately Redeemer seeks to promote what it calls 'the renaissance of Christian cultural engagement in New York City'.³³ Redeemer encourages members of 17 distinct professional groups (including one group for educators and another for PhD students) to meet regularly to discuss issues in their professions from a Christian perspective and to pray for each other.³⁴ They offer classes on Theology of Work, Finding Your Calling, Leadership Development, Ethics, Cultural Renewal and Culture-Making. Here is the example of one church actively seeking to resource its academics and others through promoting a theology of work that includes

³²See Redeemer website www.redeemer.com.

³³ See Redeemer Vision Paper #6 *Christians and Culture* on Redeemer website www.redeemer.com.

³⁴ See http://www.faithandwork.org/vocation_groups_page36.php

a theology of cultural transformation. They also offer a nine month Gotham Fellowship internship programme for young professionals designed to provide the theological, spiritual, and relational foundations required for meaningful and sustainable integration of faith and work. The Fellowship is designed to integrate three primary elements to further the social, cultural, and spiritual renewal of New York City: gospel worldview development, spiritual and personal renewal, and community formation.³⁵

Redeemer has been very deliberate and methodical in the way it has developed resourcing for its members in their daily work. In the final part of this essay I want to suggest further practical means of local engagement.

Partnership with Chaplains and Parachurch Ministries

The nature of relationships between university chaplains and the leadership of parachurch groups and local church leaders varies greatly from place to place. This depends to a great extent on a combination of the effort made by each of these people to relate to the others and the personal chemistry that helps to cement relationships. Parachurch ministries can provide an opportunity for students and Christian faculty to enjoy fellowship with Christians from other churches and be involved together in mission on campus in ways that individual churches cannot. They have privileged access to the campus and can specialise in ministry to the academic community. That said however, their ministry is often more focussed on students than faculty and even most chaplains struggle to know how to minister to those in the upper echelons of their institutions. Chaplains can exercise a ministry both from the church to the campus and from the campus to the church. Sadly this ministry to the church is often neglected, because the experience and perspective of chaplains is seldom shared with churches. This is not only true of university chaplains. In his history of the Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission in New Zealand Seton Horrill concluded that, although using the experience of its chaplains to challenge the church to respond to issues confronting people in the world of work was one of its four primary objectives, in this respect it had largely failed: 'the chaplains' statistical returns show hundreds of indepth conversations on faith/work concerns everyday ... ITIM through its chaplaincy team is making a vital contribution in 'coal face' theology. However, this massive exposure and experience in faith and work dialogue has not been taken further than a one-to-one encounter. Nor has it been

³⁵ See <http://www.gothamfellowship.org/>

the seed bed for growth into the formal Christian education programme of the Mission's member churches. In fact I am not aware of any suggestions or attempts to do so.³⁶ Chaplains often feel disconnected from the life of local churches and are open to relationship with these churches and working in partnership with them in initiatives on campus. Chaplains could also play an important role in helping to facilitate communication and mutual support between Christian faculty from different disciplines if they were focused more on resourcing faculty members and staff to have effective pastoral and prophetic ministries rather than just being concerned about their own pastoral and prophetic roles.

Hospitality for International Students

There are particularly good opportunities for churches to help provide hospitality for students from overseas in local homes. A significant number of international students never enter a New Zealand home. A national survey of international students showed that increasing contact and developing friendships with New Zealanders were sources of concern for international students.³⁷

One in four students said they had no interactions with New Zealanders in social settings, and 35% reported that they had no New Zealand friends. Seventy percent of the international students wanted more New Zealand friends, and findings confirmed that increased contact with New Zealanders was related to positive academic, social and psychological outcomes for international students.

Less than half of the students believed that New Zealanders had positive attitudes toward international students, and one in three believed that international students often experience discrimination in New Zealand. The results of the survey indicate that increasing the frequency and enhancing the quality of intercultural contact between international students and both domestic students and members of the wider community warrants increased attention.

³⁶ Seton Horrill, *Forging a Workplace Mission: The ITIM Story* (Orewa: ColCom Press, 1995), 218.

³⁷ Colleen Ward, and Anne-Marie Masgoret, *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand: report on the results of the national survey.* (June 2004)
<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/14700>

Preaching and Worship that Bridges the Gap Between Sunday and Monday

Most Christians cannot remember ever hearing teaching about the meaning of work from God's perspective.³⁸ Churches that are learning how to teach and preach the Bible story for academics are likely to at least pick up themes like:

- Loving God with all your mind
- Your mind matters to God
- Your work matters to God – Genesis 1 and 2
- Foundations for a Christian worldview.
- Daniel and friends at the University of Babylon
- Paul exegetes the cultural icons, philosophers and poets in Athens
- Learn from Him - Matthew 11:29
- On being a good Teacher and a good Student – 1 Corinthians 11:1

I have written elsewhere about the need for Liturgy, Bible Readings, Intercessions, Benedictions, Hymns and contemporary songs, Visual Images, Festivals, Commissionings, that forge stronger links with daily life outside the church by incorporating elements (both verbally and by using symbols and images) of people's every day circumstances and concerns.³⁹

Songs are a particularly powerful way of conveying a message that people can take away with them, especially if it is attached to a catchy tune. When did you last sing a song that talked about aspects of faith related to academic life?

³⁸ Alistair Mackenzie 'Supporting Christians in the Marketplace 1993-2001: What I Have Learned'. See <http://www.faithatwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supporting-Christians-in-the-Marketplace-1993-2001.pdf> This article includes results of my survey work.

³⁹ See Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work* (Melbourne:Zadok, 2009), 8-9; Also Mark Greene, *Supporting Christians at Work: a practical guide for busy pastors* (London:London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 2001); Bernard Braley (editor), *Touching the Pulse: Worship and Where We Work* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1996); Cameron Butland (editor), *Work in Worship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

*Lord of science, Lord of art,
 Lord of map and graph and chart,
 Lord of physics and research,
 Word of Bible, faith of Church,
 Lord of sequence and design,
 All the world of truth is thine.⁴⁰*

*God of offices and kitchens
 Lecture halls and factory floor,
 God of internet, computers,
 T.V. screens and so much more.
 You are always here around us
 Even when we do not know.
 Help us realise your presence
 That our Spirit life may grow.*

*Ploughing, seeding, patient waiting
 For the harvest of the soil;
 Typing, phoning and collating
 You are with us in our toil.
 In the workshop, store and office,
 Classroom, kitchen, garden, too,
 Help us see your gift and glory,
 Serve you well in all we do.⁴¹*

When R. Paul Stevens was asked, 'If there was only one thing you could do to change the culture of a congregation to support Christians at work, what would you do?' He said, 'Give me three minutes and four questions in a service every Sunday for a year.

I would get a different person up in front of the congregation each week and ask them

1. Tell us about the work you do?
2. What are some of the issues you face in your work?

⁴⁰From *God of concrete God of steel* by Bill Wallace, Christchurch NZ. (Tune: For the beauty of the earth)

⁴¹ An Australian hymn, *God of Gumtree and of Quandong*, by Rev Neville Threlfall. Slightly reworded for a student congregation by Rev Colin Wood (and sung to the tune 'What a friend we have in Jesus').

3. Does your faith make a difference to how you deal with these issues?

4. How would you like us to pray for you and your ministry in the workplace?

Then we would pray for them.⁴²

Not Just Church as Event but also as Resourcer

Given the widespread influence of Bill Hybels and his Willowcreek Church on Baptist Churches in New Zealand we would do well to heed the warnings sounded in the results of their Reveal Survey conducted at Willowcreek and with six other congregations. It was discovered, contrary to expectations, that church attendance and participation in church programmes is not directly connected with spiritual growth except for a believer's early Christian experience. The development of personal spiritual practices is the key to ongoing spiritual growth. The report concluded that churches need to transition from the role of spiritual parent encouraging dependence on church programmes to spiritual coach providing resources for people to feed themselves.⁴³ A similar warning is sounded by academic J P Moreland also writing out of the American context. Moreland says that his conclusion after twenty-six years of ministry as a professor of philosophy and also planter of two churches and four Campus Crusade ministries is that 'we evangelicals neither value nor have a strategy for developing every member of our congregations to one degree or another as Christian thinkers.' In fact, worse than this, he sees the existence of widespread 'hostility or indifference to the development of an intellectual life in the way we go about our business in the church'.⁴⁴ Moreland blames this on the move away from an emphasis on the pastor as the resident theologian and Bible teacher to the model of pastor as CEO of the church organisation and/or the pop therapist who is interesting to listen to. The church has become primarily a hospital to soothe empty selves rather than a base to equip and support God's people for their mission in the world and ministry in daily life.

⁴² Quote from a question and answer session in a class taught by R Paul Stevens that the author attended at Carey Baptist College.

⁴³ See Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Chicago:Willow, 2007).

⁴⁴ J. P. Moreland, *Love God With All Your Mind*. (Colorado Springs:NavPress, 1997), 188.

Moreland goes on to suggest a number of strategies that churches can adopt to help deepen the value of intellectual life and raise the visibility of Christian intellectuals and intellectual work including:

- A church library where books are promoted and circulated
- All ages Sunday school and study centres
- Regularly incorporate vocational and apologetical testimonies and book reports on timely topics into our services.
- Give selected worshippers 5 minutes to share how they are growing to think more Christianly in their particular work context.
- Identify Christian intellectual leaders, both those alive and those gone before, whose work we can celebrate in person or through offering an explanation and tribute.
- Better prepare teenagers for the intellectual challenges they will face at university.
- Offer better support and encouragement to those who are pursuing post-graduate work making sure that more involvement with their peers at university doesn't mean that they are also socialised out of church involvement.
- Increase giving to support Christian scholarship.⁴⁵

Community

In the course of conducting Faith at Work surveys⁴⁶ I have found that many Christians feel isolated and disconnected from other Christians in their work. There are suggestions that many academics are even more prone to work in isolation than other people. I haven't seen that proven beyond the anecdotal yet. However churches do have the opportunity to help get people connected during the week. Some connect people with prayer partners, or in prayer triplets, or small workplace cell groups. In

⁴⁵ J. P. Moreland Ibid. 197-200

⁴⁶ Alistair Mackenzie 'Supporting Christians in the Marketplace 1993-2001: What I Have Learned.' See <http://www.faithatwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supporting-Christians-in-the-Marketplace-1993-2001.pdf> This article includes results of my survey work.

other cases people maintain regular contact online. Sometimes Bible study groups have been formed. Some of these groups are connected with particular churches while others are resourced by parachurch ministries. Another strategy to keep academics connected is through churches encouraging the formation of mentoring relationships often initiated when people are students. Or the mentoring may go on through the formation of professional groupings. Large churches (such as Redeemer Presbyterian in New York referred to previously) can support the formation of a number of different professional groups that can meet regularly, but this opportunity can also be promoted by smaller churches linking with the graduate groups of particular student ministries or partnering with groups from other churches.

Some churches develop their own student ministries. Many encourage their students to get involved in student ministry groups on campus. A particularly crucial time for churches to keep connected to their students is as they embark on postgraduate study. Churches need to make sure that more involvement with their peers at university doesn't mean that these young graduate students slowly get socialised out of church involvement. Also when young people move from one centre to another during the course of their education this is a crucial time when relationships with churches can be lost or new relationships forged.

Coaching

Church communities can also offer coaching in a variety of ways beyond just the personal mentoring networks mentioned above. The Willowcreek Reveal Survey mentioned previously provides a sobering reminder that church attendance and participation in church programmes does not guarantee spiritual growth in itself, unless people are also being encouraged and resourced to grow themselves. The development of personal spiritual practices is a key to ongoing spiritual growth. The report concluded that churches need to transition from the role of spiritual parent encouraging dependence on church programmes to spiritual coach providing resources for people to feed themselves.⁴⁷

One helpful and necessary addition to this coaching is teaching and resources for making career choices and life planning. This may include a

⁴⁷ See *Reveal: Where Are You?* by Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, Chicago: Willow, 2007. Results also summarised on www.reveal.com

variety of different dimensions: how we experience God's guidance, how we understand the meaning of our vocations from a Christian perspective and how we understand our gifts and values and dreams and what this suggests about where we fit in God's purposes. I have worked personally to produce resources for this, believing that churches need to reclaim the ministry of vocational guidance and provide more assistance for students considering career options, including academic careers. This will also give Christian academics themselves tools to provide more help for their students.⁴⁸

In this coaching role churches will also hopefully emphasise the importance for students and academics to develop and mature as whole people. Os Guinness's claim that we have 'betrayed the Great Commandment to love God with our minds'⁴⁹ is probably true and is a challenge we need to respond to. However, the spiritual formation of disciples of Jesus involves learning to love God and other people with our hearts and souls and strength as well as our intellects. Approaches to Christian formation that focus on the development of the intellectual understanding of our faith but neglect other dimensions will not help to reproduce mature believers. Neither will they produce the sorts of academics who can make as much of a contribution to the life of the institutions they are part of through the sort of humanity they model as they do through the gift of their intellects.

Pastoral Leadership that Equips

To take seriously the coaching and equipping role of churches many pastors will need to change their priorities. David Miller identifies five factors related to core aspects of pastoral ministry in general that he thinks need to be more specifically applied if church members are to be more effectively equipped for ministry in daily life. These include:

- a ministry of presence and listening in the work sphere, by visiting people in their places of work.
- A ministry of preaching and prayer that intentionally and constructively addresses faith and work issues.

⁴⁸ See Mackenzie, A., Kirkland W. and Dunham A. *SoulPurpose: Making a Difference in Life and Work*. (Christchurch:NavPressNZ, 2004) Please note: the approach taken in this book is not just about finding a job, but shaping a life that expresses our faith and fits our gifts and values.

⁴⁹ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (Grand Rapids MI:Baker, 1994), 133-134.

- A ministry of teaching designed to address faith and work issues, also using the experience and expertise of other church members for input.
- A ministry of personal integration that ensures that church members are trained to utilise personal prayer and devotional study in their daily lives.
- A ministry of gatherings of working people. David Miller comments, ‘my research has found that lay-led and lay founded groups are generally more effective at understanding and meeting workplace integration needs.

It is not hard to see how these can be applied more specifically to supporting Christians in the academy. But it is also important to note that Miller is not suggesting that pastors alone hold the key. Pastoral leadership that helps to promote and cast a vision for this ministry is clearly influential, and in most cases essential. However an equally clear essential is the involvement of other church members whose enthusiasm and drive is also required to start and sustain things. And a third additional contribution that is also often required is some outside resourcing, which can often come from the leaders of parachurch ministries or chaplains or other churches engaged in this sort of ministry. There is no set pattern but most often some combination of these three contributions is involved.

Conclusion

Worldwide there has been a growing movement of interest in faith and work issues in recent years.⁵⁰ However, as David Miller’s research demonstrates, this has largely been a grass roots awakening that has developed in isolation, without engaging the structures of church or the ideas of the academy.⁵¹ As a result, churches that intentionally support Christians at work in general are quite rare and distinctive.⁵² Churches supporting Christians in the academy specifically are even more rare. The primary reason for this lack of engagement with the academy, according to

⁵⁰ Described in Alistair Mackenzie, ‘The Future for Faith at Work: a New Zealand Perspective’ in *The Diaconal Church: Beyond the Mould of Christendom* edited by David Clark (UK: Epworth, 2008), 72-73.

⁵¹ David Miller, *God at Work*, 148.

⁵² Some of the distinctives of these churches are described in Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work*. (Melbourne: Zadok Institute, 2009).

Miller, is the suspicion of intellectualism and fear that secular insights will undermine confessional beliefs.⁵³ If the statistics quoted earlier still apply then New Zealand Baptists include a relatively high percentage of members pursuing tertiary study. It is reasonable to assume that many of these will graduate and become significant leaders in many different fields of endeavour worldwide. Others are likely to become researchers and teachers in these same tertiary institutions. We have heard voices in this essay suggesting that as go our universities so will go our nation and our world. How will we support our students and academics? Here is a strategic opportunity for churches to make a more significant investment in the lives of some of its potentially most influential members. I hope that some useful ideas and strategies for this have been suggested in this paper.

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⁵³ Ibid. 148.

Tolkien's Literary Faith

ABSTRACT

J.R.R Tolkien made deep connections between his studies, his writing and his faith. Although he explored these directly in such as the anthology *Tree and Leaf*, perhaps the best expression of his ideas lies in his more imaginative works. This article is an inductive exploration of a poem and two stories by Tolkien, with some reference to his letters and the essays, considering both his literary ideas, the densely Christian nature of his writing, and the theological musings that arose there-from.

...Out of the shadows of legend I begin a little to understand the marvel of the trees, I think. I have lived to see strange days. Long we have tended our beasts and our fields, built our houses, wrought our tools, or ridden away to help in the wars of Minas Tirith. And that we called the life of Men, the way of the world. We cared little for what lay beyond the borders of our land. Songs we have that tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to our children, as a careless custom. And now the songs have come down among us out of strange places, and walk visible under the Sun.⁵⁴

In recent decades, theology, particularly that of the 'postliberals', has drawn often and heavily upon literary and linguistic sources. This has been partially prompted by the literary turn of philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida, and partially by the recognition by theologians such as Hans Frei, following Karl Barth, of the densely literary nature of the biblical revelation. Thus Marcus Eliade, Eric Auerbach, and Northrop Frye are relatively frequently cited in the theological literature.

⁵⁴ The speech of Theoden, King, upon seeing Ents for the first time in *The Two Towers* in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings (LoTR)* (London Harper Collins, 1997) (includes *The Fellowship of the Ring*, (1954), *The Two Towers*, (1954) and *The Return of the King* (1955)), 536f.

Well before this literary turn, however, professional scholars of literature and language, such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were pondering the connections between their studies and their faith, and making some provocative suggestions. One of the best known of these is the lecture Tolkien gave 'On Fairy Stories' published in the anthology *Tree and Leaf*. While, even there, Tolkien tends towards the metaphorical and allusive it remains a relatively clear statement of his thought. Perhaps the best expression of the ideas therein, however, is not in the propositional form appropriate to the lecture hall, but in his more imaginative works.

The Lord of the Rings.

The Lord of the Rings is certainly Tolkien's best-known work, and there are more than enough volumes analysing it.⁵⁵ I will, therefore, do no more than dabble in the shallow end before moving on:

In the first chapter,⁵⁶ after a few introductory paragraphs linking the present work to Tolkien's previous story, *The Hobbit*, we meet, not the main characters, but two local worthies sharing beer and gossip at an inn called *The Green Dragon*. 'The Gaffer,' old Gamgee who works in the garden of the (at this point) main character, Bilbo, and Sandyman, the miller, are the chief protagonists in a conversation about Bilbo's eccentricities – one of which is his teaching the Gaffer's son, Sam, to read. The Gaffer continues by saying:

'Elves and Dragons! I says to him. *Cabbages and potatoes are better for me and you. ...*'

The scene is reprised in the next chapter,⁵⁷ a decade later, by the protagonist's sons, Sam Gamgee and Ted Sandyman, again at the inn:

'Queer things you do hear these days, to be sure,' said Sam.
'Ah,' said Ted, 'you do, if you listen. But I can hear fireside-tales and children's stories at home, if I want to.'
'No doubt you can,' retorted Sam, 'and I daresay there's more truth in some of them than you reckon. Who invented the stories anyway? Take dragons now.'

⁵⁵ See Ralph C. Wood, 'Following the Many Roads of Recent *Tolkien* Scholarship', *Christianity & Literature* (Summer 2005, Vol. 54 Issue 4), 587-608.

⁵⁶ *LoTR*, 24ff.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 43f.

‘No thank ‘ee,’ said Ted, ‘I won’t. I heard tell of them when I was a youngster, but there’s no need to believe in them now. There’s only one Dragon in Bywater, and that’s Green,’ he said, getting a general laugh.

Ted responds to Sam’s stories of wonders with a hard-nosed ridicule, until finally Sam comes to talk of the departure from mortal lands of the immortal elves:

‘They are sailing, sailing, sailing over the Sea, they are going into the West and leaving us,’ said Sam, half chanting the words, shaking his head sadly and solemnly. But Ted laughed.

‘Well, that isn’t anything new, if you believe the old tales. And I don’t see what it matters to me or you. Let them sail! But I warrant you haven’t seen them doing it; nor anyone else in the Shire.’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ said Sam thoughtfully. He believed he had once seen an Elf in the woods, and still hoped to see more one day. Of all the legends that he had heard in his early years such fragments of tales and half-remembered stories about the Elves as the hobbits knew, had always moved him deeply. ‘There are some, even in these parts, as know the Fair Folk and get news of them,’ he said. ‘There’s Mr. Baggins now, that I work for. He told me that they were sailing and he knows a bit about Elves. And old Mr. Bilbo knew more: many’s the talk I had with him when I was a little lad.’

‘Oh, they’re both cracked,’ said Ted. ‘Leastways old Bilbo *was* cracked, and Frodo’s cracking. If that’s where you get your news from, you’ll never want for moonshine. ...’

Sam and Ted are Tolkien’s ‘Everymen’, and these conversations, though apparently trivial asides in the book, reflect some important features of his poetics. Taking, for example, the mere fact of their inclusion, it is a matter of record that Tolkien wrote his epic work with little in the way of a plan or plot, introducing major characters without any idea of who they were or what their role would eventually be.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in his reworking of the book over a considerable period of time, Tolkien produced a finely

⁵⁸ See on this Tolkien’s own words in the preface to *Tree and Leaf* (including the poem *Mythopoeia*) (London: Grafton, 1992 (1988, 1964)).

coherent plot with an almost obsessive concern for details.⁵⁹ 'Asides' such as these, then, in the finished work, can be taken to have some meaning significant to Tolkien. They in fact introduce a sub-plot which doesn't reach its conclusion until nearly a thousand pages later,⁶⁰ when these relationships and their divergent opinions come once more upon the scene and can be evaluated in the light of all that has passed in between. The two characters represent two very different approaches to the 'facts' of life, and Tolkien very clearly vindicates Sam as best representing his own views.⁶¹ Before we come to his more theoretical works, then, let us see what we may glean from this passage.

Firstly, Sam has 'learned his letters.' Tolkien consistently values literary learning. He does not despise those whose station has made such learning unnecessary or impossible, but where a literary soul or nation is to be found, Tolkien regards it highly.⁶² Literature, in and of itself, has value to him as one means by which the mundane is transcended. This becomes clearer in the poem 'Mythopoeia'.

Secondly, the fantastic and the inane are early opposed; 'Elves and Dragons' versus 'cabbages and potatoes'. And yet this opposition is not as obvious as it first appears, because in middle-earth⁶³ where Tolkien lays his tale, both Elves and Dragons have existence as valid as that of garden vegetables. Ted Sandyman pours scorn on Sam's interest in Dragons, and yet Tolkien expects that most readers of *LotR* would have already read *The Hobbit*, which has at the centre of the story a ferocious, wily, fire-breathing dragon. And in the present work, as in the previous, Elves are not only

⁵⁹ H. Carpenter, H. J.R.R. *Tolkien, A Biography* (Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1978), 206f.

⁶⁰ *LotR*, 993.

⁶¹ It is always a mistake to assume that any one character in a well-written literary work simply represents the author's perspective – or even that of 'the implied author'. The opinions of fictional characters serve first and foremost to elucidate the character which holds them and their role in the plot. Authorial perspective can be discerned, but not by some simple equation such as 'What Sam says = what Tolkien believes.'

⁶² Thus Tolkien was a philologist, not an anthropologist; he was interested in the development of languages, not humans as such.

⁶³ Middle-Earth is not, as some have supposed, a purely fantasy world but this world at some point in its pre-history; between Adam and Abraham. It is a temporal rather than a spatial shift and is assumed to have continuity with our own world today. See *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* edited by H. Carpenter and C. Tolkien (New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 220. See also *Tree and Leaf*, 16 for the literary effect of such gulfs in time.

present, but their story frames *LotR* completely.⁶⁴ That Ted dismisses these creatures as ‘moonshine’ even whilst he half-heartedly acknowledges their existence, indicates a preference, perhaps prevalent among the Hobbits, for that which is familiar, close-at-hand, and of pragmatic value. Tolkien is opposing a perspective which denies the importance of the transcendent rather than the reality of it.

The ‘This-worldly’ character of mythical elements such as dragons and ‘the Fair Folk’ are an important feature of Tolkien’s thought, indicating that he sees a divide lying, not between those who believe in a ‘heavenly’ or ‘other-worldly’ truth, and those who insist upon an earth-bound philosophy, but rather between those who see in the elements of this world truths that point beyond themselves, and those who see in the same elements little more than the inane. This distinction occurs in Tolkien’s thought over and again; he is not disputing the ‘facts’ as such, but rather the meaning of those ‘facts’.

Thirdly, Ted initially dismisses Sam’s interests on the grounds that he can hear ‘children’s stories’ at home. They are unimportant because they belong to children and the domestic hearth. Later, he dismisses them on the grounds that Sam cites Mistery Bilbo and Frodo Baggins as his authorities, gentlemen who are believed by Sandyman senior to be ‘queer’ and Sandyman junior to be ‘cracked.’ Tolkien objected strongly to the marginalisation of the fantastic as the proper concern for children or for lunatics only.⁶⁵ There are here two concerns; one is that fantasy (the literary element Tolkien describes as being at the heart of Fairy Story or Mythology) has validity for the educated and the wise at least as much as for the child and the crazed. Of Fairy stories, he says with Sam - ‘there’s more truth in some of them than you reckon.’ and then goes on to ask ‘Who invented the stories anyway?’ For Tolkien, the philologist, the question of origins was important.⁶⁶ Secondly, though, there is a typically Tolkienian sensitivity to ‘little people’⁶⁷ who in their simplicity and

⁶⁴ This ‘frame’ was considered by Tolkien to be his main work, and was unpublished in his life-time - *Letters*, 38 & 285.

⁶⁵ *Tree and Leaf*, 36ff

⁶⁶ Though not essential to the understanding of the text; see his ‘Tower’ analogy ‘Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics.’ *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 245–95.

⁶⁷ The wanderer in Tolkien’s early work *The Cottage of Lost Play* wonders at the small size of the house (an entrance to the land of *Faerie*), and is told ‘Small is the dwelling, but smaller still are they that dwell here – for all that enter must become very small indeed, or of their own good wish become as very little folk even as

shrewdness 'keep faith' in a way in which many of their more sophisticated 'betters' have abandoned. This theme is replayed several times throughout Tolkien's epic,⁶⁸ but is here rooted in the very common-place world of the Hobbits, where, even though they are all little people, some are socially smaller than others, and as such maintain a greater humility before authority and perhaps a greater openness to different realities as they have fewer fences to defend.

Finally, Sam and his Gaffer in advancing their opinions both refer to the kindness and generosity of their patrons, the Bagginses, as against the all-too-prudential interests of the Sandymans. Tolkien here introduces the notion of good fellowship that lies at the emotional heart of the tale he goes on to tell. Ted, of his own resources and wit dismisses Sam's fantasy interests; Sam, by contrast, references several others – who Ted then ridicules in turn. Against the witnesses of personal experience and learning, Sandyman brings *argumentum ad hominum*. It plays well to the crowd, but it doesn't convince Sam, ultimately the most important of all Tolkien's characters as a model of Christian discipleship.

This initial reading gives us a thumb-nail sketch of key Tolkienian concerns:

- For literacy, against illiteracy.
- For the oral literacy of the 'Fairy-tale' and against those who, perhaps in an attempt to attain 'adult' sophistication, despise these, inducing in themselves a sort of deep illiteracy as to transcendent truths.

they stand upon the threshold' (J.R.R.Tolkien, *The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*. (Christopher Tolkien, Ed.) (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1986), 14). In commenting on the relative appropriateness of otherwise of fairy stories for children in his essay 'On Fairy Stories', he says 'there is a truth in Andrew Lang's words, 'He that would enter into the realm of Faerie should have the heart of a little child.' For that possession is necessary to all high adventure, into kingdoms both less and far greater than Faerie. But humility and innocence – these things 'the heart of a child' must mean in such a context – do not necessarily imply an uncritical wonder...' (Ibid, 42)

⁶⁸ Instances of this may be seen in the presumptions of Eomer and Hama in regard to Theoden, of Faramir and Beregon in relation to Denethor, of the true-hearted Hobbits of the Fellowship of the Ring contrasted with the corruptible Boromir.

- For ‘little people’ who are open to transcendent truths, and against the hard-nosed pragmatism of policy-makers and their followers.
- For good fellowship, and for humility in the face of learning and experience, and against the witty but superficial ‘independent thinker’.

In Tolkien’s writing the attitude towards the transcendent and the means of understanding the transcendent is framed by these concerns. They are the concerns of a specific time and place in our intellectual history; – early 20th Century Oxbridge against the backdrop of the 19th Century. And yet, in engaging with the disputes of his day,⁶⁹ Tolkien drew upon the resources of many ages, and thus was enabled also to continue to speak to the ages yet to come. His vision of reality, his ‘metaphysics’, and his understanding of the place of literature in that, though translated to us in the idiom of his own context⁷⁰ continues to resonate today with readers from around the globe, as evidenced by a burgeoning market for ‘Tolkien studies’.⁷¹

To proceed down the path of understanding Tolkien’s literary imagination we need to turn to the explicit statement of his poetics in the essay ‘On Fairy Stories’ from *Tree and Leaf*. Rather than travelling the direct route, however, we will be better served by a more circuitous approach, which allows us to enter into that territory with greater sympathy for the ideas expressed there, by first surveying the poem ‘Mythopoeia’, then noting the salient points of the short, allegorical story ‘Leaf by Niggle’, both also found in *Tree and Leaf*.

⁶⁹ Against, e.g. Skinner and Russell’s materialistic determinism in Wood, ‘Recent Tolkien Scholarship’.

⁷⁰ A trite example of this is his unthinking use of what we would now describe as sexist language.

⁷¹ See, e.g. D. Smitherman, ‘Revised Editions of Tolkien Scholarship’ in *Rocky Mountain Review*, (Spring, 2003) and Wood, ‘Recent Tolkien Scholarship’.

Mythopoeia

The superscription, to 'Misomythus' is to C.S. (Jack) Lewis, as Christopher Tolkien makes clear.⁷² This was at an early stage of their relationship, and Lewis was apparently arguing at this time for a materialism that he later repudiated entirely. The larger context of the poem, however, is not merely an argument for the transcendental over materialism, but an argument for a specifically Christian reality and a specifically literary means of apprehending that reality. We don't know how much of the content of this poem was expressed in that early discussion, as it was obviously composed over a period of time following those events, and may well have drawn upon a variety of other conversations and sources as inspiration. Its primary value here, however, is not as a monument on C.S. Lewis's Damascene road but as Tolkien's succinct and deeply personal statement of commitment to a transcendent reality and the necessity of a literary approach to it.

In the first verse Tolkien lampoons the scientism of his day and logical positivism. That is, he opposes those movements that proposed to read the 'facts' of the matter in a purely materialistic and reductionist or 'analytic' manner.

His next verse introduces the idea of creation, and natural elements and events (including, apparently, evolution) as having their origin in God. Beyond this, however, he evokes something of the strangeness and wonderfulness of creation, and the fact that as one of nature's operations, these are experienced sensuously and neurologically by people.

The third verse is key as in it Tolkien identifies speech as the means by which neurological/sense impressions become something more than either; speech, by naming reality, makes other cognitive operations possible. Via the medium of language we imagine possible futures, we evaluate reality, and we experience joy in it.⁷³ These operations go far beyond a simple 'record or photograph' of sense impressions as though we were merely machines.

⁷² Preface to *Tree and Leaf*, 7. Whilst much has been made of the divisions between Tolkien and Lewis, these should not be allowed to overshadow the reality of a warm, mutually respectful, and professionally profitable relationship spanning many years.

⁷³ It is noteworthy that Tolkien here follows Augustine in identifying a trinity of cognitive operations by which to evoke human thought.

Tolkien also attributes to humanity inherent powers of knowing ourselves *as part of a natural order*, experiencing within ourselves ‘movements’ by which we understand ourselves to be in relation to our environment in its specific details (trees and stars, etc.). Given the prior reference to God’s making precisely these details, this must be understood as the order of creation. The epistemological focus in this verse, however, is on sense and experience, not special revelation; i.e. Tolkien emphasises the human side of the equation rather than the divinity he names. Nevertheless, it is significant that he sees human ‘story-telling’ as necessarily taking place within a mythological framework.⁷⁴

But what are these ‘movements’? What are the ‘great powers’ we bring out of ourselves? The last lines of this verse, perhaps confusingly, refer to ‘elves ...in the mind’. Tolkien says elsewhere ‘my ‘elves’ are only a representation of an apprehension of a part of human nature’... ‘and ... the art and poetry of men is largely dependent on it, or modified by it.’⁷⁵

In other words, Tolkien here uses mythological language for what we would describe as a psychological fact – the cognitive capability to imagine, to make ‘stories’ that have meaning, to make ‘myths’ such as those he goes on to describe. In doing so he recalls the ancient Greek idea of an attendant daemon or muse recently popularised by Phillip Pullman in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, but well-known to Tolkien and his colleagues.⁷⁶ This verse, with its self-justifying mythological language, is the heart of Tolkien’s claim for poetics, and reaches its climax with verse four; we are informed in all our understandings, all our stories of ourselves and our universe, by what are ultimately ‘mythological’ concerns.

In verse four Tolkien fleshes out his understanding of the role of such myth-making as lending value and meaning to the universe; stars, heaven and earth, he suggests, only have beauty and meaning to us because of their mythological associations. As Polanyi has suggested, every element of our knowledge is dependent upon just such an appreciation of value; every research decision is guided by intuitive, even aesthetic, considerations.

⁷⁴ In this Tolkien concurs with Northrop Frye, whose second essay in the *Anatomy of Criticism* notes that poesis by its nature assumes the limits of the conceivable, rather than the limits of experience, and therefore places nature within a mythological setting rather than allowing nature to set the limits of imagination. N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1957), 115ff.

⁷⁵ *Letters*, 149

⁷⁶ see e.g. C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image; An introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967 (1964)), 215.

Tolkien here makes a similar affirmation; we see nothing if we do not allow a pre-existing awareness of meaningfulness to guide our seeing. Such meaningfulness, inevitably in Tolkien's view, has its roots in mythological understandings.

If verses three and four are the heart of Tolkien's poetics, the theological centre of this poem is found in verse five. It is notable that he here refers to God as the 'only Wise', a title that, whilst it reserves the uniqueness of God, leans heavily towards the wisdom tradition, with its exploration of the meaning of human life in its day-day detail and human reflection, rather than in great events or revelations.

With that hint as background, Tolkien roots his claims for poetics, for that which arises in 'the heart of man', in his understanding of the *imago Dei* – we are 'makers' of Myth because we image the Maker.⁷⁷ Having referenced, once again, the creation story, Tolkien must then deal with the darkness which that story brings to us – the fall as well as the creation of man. He describes it relationally as an estrangement, and also as being out of 'grace'.⁷⁸ He hints at the poverty of the prodigal as well as the fall of Nebuchadnezzar, in referring to the 'rags of lordship' we retain. The burden of the statement, however, is aimed at moderating the impact of the fall. It is severe, but not total. Despite texts such as Jeremiah 17.9 and the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity, we can rely upon truth at the core of our being, a wisdom that remains with us as a remnant of the image of God. Thus we are not wholly lost, nor wholly changed from what we were made. Nor have we been dethroned – the creation mandate yet rests upon us. This command to subdue the earth as *imago Dei* is here interpreted by Tolkien as a command to involve creation in a new creative enterprise – we are, under God, sub-creators.⁷⁹

Tolkien refines this image with the idea of 'light', meaning at the very least the knowledge referred to above as a 'movement', a 'vein of spirit' perhaps

⁷⁷ This is stated explicitly in *Tree and Leaf*, 52

⁷⁸ Given Tolkien's vivid awareness of medieval thinking, 'grace' should probably be understood here to mean something more like 'favour' as well as the more strictly theological '*charis*'. Tolkien is making at least one pun at this point, though with an eye to an abundance of meaning rather than simply humour.

⁷⁹ See *Tree and Leaf*, 50ff, where Tolkien quotes this section of the poem in his essay 'On Fairy Stories' to make this point.

an apprehension of the ‘other’ or the transcendent.⁸⁰ This light is refracted through us and finds thus a multiplicity of new expressions that can be communicated to others. Tolkien goes on to acknowledge that we might, in our sub-creative use of this knowledge, create badly and even propose evil – but that it is our ‘right’ to do so; that is, it is an inherent part of being human that we can and should make the attempt to imagine transcendent reality. This essential aspect of human nature, imaging our creator in our creativity and particularly in our use of language is Tolkien’s theological home base in this poem. As Ralph Wood puts it,⁸¹

For Tolkien, we are made in the image of God primarily because we are speaking creatures. The other animals can duplicate almost every human deed except one: the act of articulate breath called speech. It is our chief means for communication and thus for creativity. Tongue and mind are co-eval, Tolkien liked to say:⁸² language and thought come into being at the same time. As products of the *Logos*, we are creatures of *logoi*.

In verse six Tolkien returns to contemporary arguments, perhaps tilting here at Freud, Feuerbach, and maybe Nietzsche too. He doesn’t duck the possibility that the specific ‘dreams’ or myths by which we express and partially fulfil our desire for transcendence are misled and merely escapism.⁸³ but he rebuts the accuser by asking where such a desire comes from in the first place? Tolkien points to the all-too-contemporary reality of evil to make the point that we do, in fact, have a standard of values which in and of itself justifies the desire for something better than that which is.

Verses seven to nine are beatitudes for myth-makers. They are those who have not succumbed to materialism and consumerism, socialism or capitalism (‘organised delight in lotus isles of economic bliss’). They remember the ‘night’, with its overtones of the chthonic forces pressing in upon the ancient Anglo-Saxon mead hall⁸⁴ and the hour of evil in St John’s Gospel; both of which are echoed in the Sauronic darkness in *LotR*.

⁸⁰ See Augustine’s *City of God* Bk. XI, Ch.27 for a possible tributary of this stream of thought: ‘That spiritual light with which our mind is somehow irradiated, so that we can form right judgements of all things.’

⁸¹ Wood, ‘Recent Tolkien Scholarship’, 588-9.

⁸² In the essay ‘On Fairy Stories’, 24.

⁸³ Dealt with more fully in ‘On Fairy Stories’, 55 – 61.

⁸⁴ Wood, ‘Recent Tolkien Scholarship’, 592.

They have no converse with evil though they live in its shadow. Thus far they stand above the godless philosophers of the previous verse.

These are humble and even pitiful creatures, however; their works are dignified not by their substance, but by what they point towards: their room is small and bare, their tools clumsy, but what they make is 'gilded by the far-off day'. This is a shift in orientation; previously Tolkien has found justification for the value of mythopoeia in human origins, now he finds it in our destiny. Our 'little arks, though frail and poorly filled' are 'steered through seas contrary towards a wraith; a rumour of a harbour.' The destination is 'guessed by faith'. The coming day is 'hoped and believed in under Shadow's sway.' These verses extol the virtue of hope⁸⁵ or faith, especially in the context of difficulty, darkness and frailty. Here is a key insight; that our inherent ability to conceive of transcendence needs to have a point to which it can harness itself by the operation of hope or faith; a 'Day' or 'Harbour' from which we take our bearings.

Verse ten continues to extol the myth-makers in similar terms; the enemy is now named 'Death', with its implications of ultimate defeat and despair for humanity, or the alternative (an easier despair perhaps) of the lotus-isles of 'economic bliss'. Not only do the poets warn us of the dangers of such delusions, however, but they encourage us to do what we can against the enemy by 'kindling our hearts with legendary fire,' showing us both our present and our past in the light of the eschaton.

Complimenting the three beatitudes of verses seven to nine, verse eleven contains three statements, wishes by which Tolkien identifies himself with each of the blessed images of Mythopoeia in reverse order. Beginning with that of the minstrels with power to 'stir the unseen', then the mariners who may 'pass beyond the fabled West',⁸⁶ he completes the series by returning to the 'beleaguered fools' behind locked doors⁸⁷

where their gold,
impure and scanty, yet they loyally bring

⁸⁵ Hope, or acting as though hope were possible when all hope has fled, is the highest virtue of *LotR*, as demonstrated especially by Sam (pp 888, 901, 913, 918), but also by Pippin (749), Gandalf (797), and a host of other characters, especially Aragorn (pp 1035-6) whose elvish name, *Estel* means 'hope'.

⁸⁶ This is certainly not a reference to Western Europe, nor America, but probably the legendary isle of Atlantis, to which Tolkien's own mythical Numenor is related.

⁸⁷ In the repeated motif of the locked door we find a glimpse of that rejection of modern life characteristic of Tolkien (*Tree and Leaf*, 56-60, Carpenter, 130).

to mint in image blurred of distant king,
 or in fantastic banners weave the sheen
 heraldic emblems of a lord unseen.

Here at last the 'day' and the 'harbour', the 'legendary fire' of the minstrels is given a personal aspect; a King. A Lord. But we don't have the King himself; he is distant and we mint a 'blurred image'. He is unseen and we but weave his emblems into 'fantastic banners'. This is no omnipresent Christ but a wholly eschatological messiah. Tolkien's point, however, is that in his absence his influence is mediated to us by myths and myth-makers. And he desires to be one of these.⁸⁸

The twelfth and final verse in the body of the poem returns to the philosophical battlefield where Tolkien makes his final renunciation, not of the facts of modern science but of the meanings assumed therein. Such a world is 'immutable' and has no room for the possibilities of creative arts. He concludes by returning to the creation mandate, and the possibility of idolatry:

I bow not yet before the Iron Crown,
 nor cast my own small golden sceptre down.

Tolkien refuses to relinquish the privilege or the responsibility to act as he believes he was made to act; to image the creator through creativity. Against this acceptance of the artistic task, he sets worship of the 'Iron Crown'.⁸⁹ Such worship may be despairing (as in Denethor), grudging and envious (as in Saruman) or enthusiastic (as in the Nazgul). It images a rejection of hope and faith and an acceptance of the inane and the machine.

The final verse of the poem is an epilogue of sorts; a vision of heaven as the true home of the poet, where there is no longer any fault in the making, or distortion in the seeing. The poet is situated between the 'Blessed Land' and the longed-for 'Day' himself, between a renewed heaven and earth, and the renewer. From this vantage she or he may turn from gazing upon God, to gaze upon Paradise to find God perfectly

⁸⁸ That he does, in fact, communicate a Christian vision in his own mythological writings is now practically beyond dispute; though there remains disagreement as to the degree of his success!

⁸⁹ This crown is worn by the Satan of his own mythology, and it was plundered by the tragic hero, Beren in *The Silmarilion*, (Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1979), 217. 'Beren' is the name that Tolkien had inscribed upon his own grave-stone.

reflected there. This summarises Tolkien's beatific vision; being made in the image of the creator, we ourselves must create while we live. In that making we are inspired by God himself, and by the creation of God, in which we discover his reflection. That last point remains significant – that creation has an eschatological significance.

Throughout *Mythopoeia* Tolkien has upheld the poet as a hero, who, with every disadvantage, yet remains faithful and hopeful. The disadvantages are real and arise, as often as not, from culpable weakness, but the setting is that of a tragedy rather than that of a crime novel. Tolkien is not so interested in human guilt as he is in human faithfulness in the face of temptation and frailty. God is not cast as the judge so much as the Lord of the manor, or the father of the household ordering his affairs: 'Salvation changes not, nor yet destroys / garden nor gardener, children or their toys.'

Mythopoeia, then, moves from creation to eschaton and finds at both points validation for the human creative enterprise as the worshipful reflection of God himself. The primary means for this reflection to find expression in human life is through language, by which we realistically, if somewhat obscurely, image creation, and thereby make informed and formative 'stories'. That these might take the form of myth does not disqualify them at all, as, for Tolkien, the explanatory power of such stories far outstrips that of the scientific myths being propagated around him.

Whilst acknowledging the possibility of error and self-deception Tolkien nevertheless affirms the validity of human values, as drawn, in some respect, from God, and as pointing towards him in faith and hope.

Interestingly the third theological virtue, charity, is missing from this poem. Whilst the values that undergird the anathemas and the benedictions therein may be seen as arising from a loving heart, this virtue does not appear to be necessary to the creative enterprise. This is in contrast to the fourth point gleaned from the *LotR* reading with which we began and underlines the incompleteness of *Mythopoeia* as an expression of Tolkien's poetics. For a fuller picture, we should now turn to his short, analogical story, 'Leaf by Niggle'.

Before we leave 'Mythopoeia', however, I pause to mark the reference points for this newly mapped territory:

1. Language, and the language arts are the key means by which we relate to creation and creator.
2. ‘Mythology’ is the limit horizon of these arts.
3. This creativity arises out of our being the image and likeness of the creator which, despite the fall, continues to exist in us according to Roman Catholic theology.
4. Myth-makers, therefore, are those who, however inadequately, point us to that which is ‘beyond’ the inane; holding out hope of a deeper reality which can be accepted by faith.
5. Tolkien identifies himself as a myth-maker, and the eschatological Christ as the deeper reality, with myths mediating the gap.
6. Our final destination is a renewed heaven and earth within which our ongoing creativity will be faultless.

Leaf by Niggle.

From its inception this story is problematic. Tolkien’s preface to it tells us that ‘It has not been changed since it reached manuscript form, very swiftly, one day when I awoke with it already in mind.’⁹⁰ Thus it appears that the story arose as whole cloth as from a dream, and has had no subsequent rewriting or editing. This, from the original ‘Niggle’ whose insistence on getting the small details right endlessly frustrated publishers, proof-readers and typesetters,⁹¹ is unusual. Both the lack of editing and the fact that Tolkien communicated the art-less origin of the story (rather embarrassing for an author who took considerable pride in his craft and who so thoroughly enjoyed ‘origins’ that he was prone to invent them for his stories where they didn’t otherwise exist),⁹² indicate that he thought it to be something special. There is very little indication that Tolkien enjoyed mysticism in itself, but he did employ dream communications in his stories,⁹³ and Catholicism has always had a strongly mystical wing. It may well be that he received this story as ‘a gift’;⁹⁴ an assurance that his

⁹⁰ *Tree and Leaf*, 6.

⁹¹ See, e.g. Carpenter, 142.

⁹² See e.g. in *Farmer Giles of Ham*, itself a story of word origins, as well as in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, and even in the pseudo-historical notes attached to *LotR*, evoking a kind of redaction criticism.

⁹³ See e.g. *LotR*, 239 & 254.

⁹⁴ *Tree and Leaf*, 88.

preoccupation with myth, and especially with the mythology of his own creation, did have some value at a time when he doubted this.⁹⁵

A second indication that this story has a somewhat unique place in the Tolkien canon is its clearly allegorical nature.

Necessary Excurses upon Allegory in Tolkien

Tolkien is on record as saying:

I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.⁹⁶

Tolkien here clearly says that he dislikes allegory because it is a-historical. Like the *Pilgrim's Progress*, copies of which could still be found on many a mantelpiece in post-war Britain, allegory often occupies an 'empty' time and space. There is no feature of the landscape, no past or present in these imaginary worlds, other than those that have a correspondence with something else 'in the real world' – nothing exists because it is good or right in itself. This is the sort of dusty blandness that Tolkien objects to. Thus, an author who offers such an allegory is providing poor fare to the reader. Instead of the riches of 'history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of the reader', the author instead presents a tract; a piece of propaganda that can only be read one way, with one meaning, and with no room for other points of view. Such allegory is despised by Tolkien.

But the quotation above is taken from the foreword to a later edition of the extremely popular *LotR*, in which people immediately found all sorts of allegorical meanings. Patrick Curry saw in this phenomenon:

...a single-minded reductionism that sees everything in such a story as 'representing' something else in line with a predetermined interpretive programme... The type of literature which might be said to describe an important part

⁹⁵ Carpenter, 199.

⁹⁶ *LotR*, xv.

of Tolkien's work, fairy tales, has been subjected to Freudian, feminist, structuralist, Jungian, anthroposophical and Marxist interpretations in just this way. And they have frequently resulted in some real insights. But too often the price is a depressing nothing-buttery. Every other dimension of the story is ignored, while the meaning is tacitly assumed to be exhausted. The spirit-to-letter ratio of these accounts is so low that, unlike the stories themselves, they are difficult and dispiriting to read. And behind it lies a woeful blindness to the power, here and now, of the myths and folk- and fairy-tales themselves.⁹⁷

Thus Tolkien reacts as he did above in his foreword, but also in the following excerpts from letters to readers:

It [LotR] is not 'about' anything but itself. Certainly it has *no* allegorical intentions, general, particular, or topical, moral, religious, or political.⁹⁸

...what appreciative readers have got out of the work or seen in it has seemed fair enough, even when I do not agree with it. Always excepting of course any 'interpretations' in the mode of simple allegory: that is, the particular and the topical. In a larger sense, it is I suppose impossible to write any 'story' that is not allegorical in proportion as it 'comes to life'; since each of us is an allegory, embodying in a particular tale and clothed in the garments of time and place, universal truth and everlasting life.⁹⁹

The first letter quoted here reiterates and reinforces Tolkien's foreword in *LotR*, but the second adds something else; he makes clear there that various appreciative interpretations are 'fair enough' even though he may not agree with them himself provided they are not 'in the mode of simple allegory', by which he means interpretations that try to reduce the story to a single interpretation – *a la* allegory. He moderates his distaste for 'allegory' however, by using the qualifier 'simple'. Not all allegory, obviously, need be simple. He goes on to note that all stories are 'allegorical' to the degree that they 'come to life', i.e. to the degree that they have sufficient complexity and depth that they resist a simplistic

⁹⁷ P. Curry, *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* (Mariner Books, 2004), 6f.

⁹⁸ *Letters*, 220.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 212.

reductionism.¹⁰⁰ His next statement, however, goes much further, saying that as we each embody universal truth and everlasting life in our personal histories, in ourselves we are 'allegories'! Here is life defined by art with a vengeance! Clearly Tolkien does not see allegory as an utterly invalid literary technique, but as the quintessential shape of human being; in our selves, in all our particularity, we are 'allegories' of God. Here is yet another reference to our being made in His 'image and likeness'. Thus the 'mundane' of human life points to the heights of the transcendent.

What we have here is a blurring of distinction between the concepts of allegory and analogy. Just such blurring goes on in 'Leaf by Niggle'. While it clearly has very simple allegorical elements ('Journey' = 'death')¹⁰¹ it also has sufficient depth and richness, purely as a story, to be enjoyed in its own terms. Tolkien succeeds, then, according to his own criteria, despite stepping beyond his stipulation in *Beowulf*¹⁰² where 'The large symbolism is near the surface, but it does not break through, nor become allegory.' In Niggle the symbolism does become allegorical, but it works because it arises naturally from within a lively story, sharpening its point without dulling its meaningfulness.

Just so, we might suppose, in human lives too. The 'large symbolisms' by which we really live do from time to time break the surface of life and allow themselves to be clearly seen – but in so doing do not destroy the integrity of that human life, nor reduce it to nothing other than the symbol. A Christian is more than theology, though less than God. An author is more than literature, and a gardener more than horticulture. But in each case, the 'large symbolisms' by which life is lived do define and direct life, and may be seen 'breaking the surface' of life in worship, writing, and weeding. While it clearly has allegorical elements then, as Tolkien said, 'Leaf by Niggle' 'is not properly an 'allegory' so much as 'mythical'. For Niggle is meant to be a real mixed-quality *person* and not an 'allegory' of any single vice or virtue.'¹⁰³ Allegorical – but too rich to be simple allegory.

We must consider also that in Niggle Tolkien painted himself and his work¹⁰⁴ – a niggler over details, feeling inadequate to address the tasks

¹⁰⁰ *Letters*, 145.

¹⁰¹ T. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth: How JRR Tolkien created a new mythology*. (Revised and Expanded Ed.) (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003), 43.

¹⁰² Tolkien, 'Beowulf', 7.

¹⁰³ *Letters*, 320f.

¹⁰⁴ See on this point *Letters*, 113 -4, 125 – 8, 313.

before him,¹⁰⁵ and sacrificing most of them in order to pour himself into a single overambitious project, a ‘tree’¹⁰⁶ which grew, put out roots and branches, obscuring and revealing an entire world, and hosting strange and glorious birds – but then needing to put all that on hold to attend to the business of life and the demands of duty.¹⁰⁷

Niggle and his Leaves

What happens to this ‘tree’ (an analogue for ‘sub-creation’) is an essential point of the story, but a more important aspect is what became of the painter. The story addresses precisely that deficiency we found in ‘Mythopoeia’ – the absence of Charity in the creative enterprise. Here it is firstly set in opposition to the work of the myth-maker. Niggle resents every interruption of his work, but ‘he could not get rid of his kind heart’. His ‘kindness’ (more a sense of moral duty) to the neighbour whom he cannot like and with whom he has nothing more than a boundary in common ultimately make it impossible for him to complete his creative work. He must undertake his ‘journey’ leaving it unfinished and largely unappreciated. This is Niggle’s nadir; his tragedy is that the art that rendered his kindness cold and tardy has apparently been wasted by that kindness. He departs in confusion, as pitiful as any tramp by Beckett. Death prevents him from making good in any area. This was a real possibility for Tolkien, writing his epic in the dangerous days of World War Two. It was during this time that the story ‘appeared’ in his mind.¹⁰⁸

What follows for Niggle, however, is a different story. Having undertaken his unwanted ‘journey’ he is put to hard, painful labour through which he learns to work carefully and effectively – in other words, not to ‘niggle’ at things. Then he is ordered to rest, before being ‘rehabilitated’ to another place. This is largely due to the intercession of a ‘gentle’ voice with a ‘stern’ voice. These unseen characters debate the possible merits of Niggle’s work – his painting and his kindnesses. Clearly they are the Father and the Son, who are concerned here, not so much for the life of Niggle (‘His heart was in the right place’)¹⁰⁹ but the impoverished state of his soul. His few merits are not an argument for ‘reward’ but for the best

¹⁰⁵ Carpenter, 199, Shippey, 227 f.

¹⁰⁶ *Letters*, 321.

¹⁰⁷ Tolkien’s letters to his son (*Letters*, 69ff) are replete with his frustrations.

¹⁰⁸ *Letters* 252.

¹⁰⁹ *Tree and Leaf*, 85.

'treatment' of that poverty. This treatment is felt to be exceedingly gracious – 'a load of rich gifts and the summons to a King's feast'.¹¹⁰ The biblical metaphors here point directly to the experience of grace overtaking works. Though Tolkien is not writing for Protestant sensitivities over the relation between grace and works, they need not be concerned at this point for however he emphasises the importance of works, he does not make them determinative.

The 'other place' to which Niggle is sent for continued 'treatment' is an otherwise unoccupied, but oddly recognisable piece of countryside, at the centre of which he discovers... his tree! The tree that he had spent his life creating, here lifted from paint and made real. He spreads his arms wide and exclaims 'It is a gift!'¹¹¹ He has been moved from purgatory to paradise.¹¹²

He discovers that the countryside around him (also from his painting) needs completion, and as he examines what remains to be done, he wishes his neighbour, with his gardening abilities, could be there with him – and shortly he is. The two of them complete the task, learning from and enjoying each other as they do so.

The eschaton for mythmakers; Faith, Hope, *and* Charity

Tolkien here claims for human 'sub-creation' an eternal significance; the possibility that our creative works will be redeemed with us, and that heaven (with its purgatorial aspects) will give us the opportunity to realise our gifts in all their fullness. As in the last verse of 'Mythopoeia' 'Salvation changes not, nor yet destroys / Garden nor gardener, children or their toys.' Here are Tolkien's poets with faultless fingers on their harps. This is his hope, and the faith which makes hopeful art possible. But Tolkien's vision is richly biblical, and therefore richly realistic. Thus he carefully depicts both the tension between love and art and the necessity for them to come together for anything of eternal significance to be created.

¹¹⁰ *Tree and Leaf*, 86.

¹¹¹ *Tree and Leaf*, 88.

¹¹² *Letters*, 111.

The relation between Heaven and Earth

Examining this concept of eternally significant ‘subcreation’ reveals that Tolkien saw a direct continuity between creation and recreation; that which in a more naïve theology might be called ‘Earth’ and ‘Heaven’. Tolkien’s more complex and biblical vision is one of the renewing of the whole of creation (heaven *and* earth) and within that the redeeming of humanity and human works; thus he describes the incorporation of Niggle’s art into the landscape of paradise as being ‘taken up into *Creation*’.¹¹³ Creation, as belonging to God and as having an eternal significance, is an essential category for Tolkien. Human beings are related to both creation and creator; we are created, and in the likeness of the creator. Therefore it is in our own creative activity that those relationships become effective and enjoyable. Art – such as myth-making – relates us to our whole environment, the material and the spiritual; the created and the creator.

Our excursion to ‘Niggle’s Parish’ has given us a new set of references for our literary/theological map-making, but they substantially coincide with the previous bearings. In exploring ‘Leaf by Niggle’ we find that:

1. Art should follow the richness of creation - as it is reflected in the richness of mythology – rather than the oversimplifications of ideology – as reflected in simplistic analogy.
2. Human life in itself is an ‘allegory’ or analogy of the creator.
3. Tolkien, again, is exploring the issues raised by his own identity as a mythmaker.
4. A core issue is the tension between faith-and-hope oriented artistic creativity and the demands of human relationships. Tolkien concludes that it is essential to the creative task that the duties of charity are discharged and the delights of *koinonia* thus learned.
5. Tolkien looks forward to an eschaton in which artist and art are purified together and given a place in paradise.
6. This paradise is in direct continuity with the creation that already subsists. It is on this ground that Tolkien hopes to find that human sub-creation also continues to the extent to which it arises from the same source as original creation.

¹¹³ *Letters*, 195 (italics mine).

Thus, in these three imaginative works – the epic *Lord of the Rings*, the poem *Mythopoeia*, and the short story *Leaf by Niggle*, we discover that Tolkien wove a great many ideas and convictions about the role of poesis. Although the essay *On Fairy Stories* is his best-known defence of his literary/theological views, those same views find their most compelling expression in the form most appropriate to them. The defence of poesis, and especially poesis as worship, is best carried out by the myth-maker at his art:

*Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme
of things not found within recorded time...*

Roger Driver-Burgess
Thames Baptist Church

Missio Dei: Mission in Bold Humility What can we learn from the past that will equip us for now and the future?¹

Address to the NZ Baptist Research Annual Meeting August 2010

When Karl Marx was thinking about change in society, how it happens and what powers and empowers it he concluded that

Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification.Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.²

¹ Dedicated to Laurice (Nov 30th 2008) and Alan Kilpatrick (August 24th 2008) Who showed me Christ in word and deed. And to Joy Smith and Jean Thompson: two missionaries who inspired me when I was a child.

² Full Quote is: Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man—state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world,

Of course more latterly we might apply that description to hedonistic consumerism but at a time when opium was considered simply to deaden pain and render listless Marx makes comment about how faith was merely being used to prop up the status quo and keep the poor as quiet as possible while exploiting them to maximum advantage.

I want that as our background as we explore the question of Missio Dei- God's Mission - and to consider whether we in participating in that mission have in fact offered something that has merely given illusory happiness or something that has offered a genuine alternative, an abundant life, a life that reflects the fullness that God intended when he created the physical world and said repeatedly on looking at it 'Its good!' For in that mission lies the life and purpose of the church.

David Bosch was one of the foremost missional thinkers of the 20th Century. A South African who was actively opposed to apartheid he was an amazing bridge between the mainline and evangelical branches of the Western Church and Catholicism, and had substantial links to Orthodoxy as well. (Amahoro and Annemie) As Bosch reviewed the changing paradigms of missional thinking during the 20th Century in his Magnum Opus, 'Transforming Mission' and examined the way the International Missions Council and the WCC came together over that time, he

because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.

points to the ‘momentous shift in the understanding of Church and Mission’³ In noting the shift which also occurred in Catholic Theology where the Second Vatican Council and those that followed it recognised that in the future the ‘Church is not presenting itself imperiously and proudly but humbly, it does not define itself in legal categories or as an elite of exalted souls but as a servant community’⁴ A seismic shift from a model of mission that had expanded with empire and had always been ‘out there’ while the church was ‘close here’.

There are some quite fundamental shifts in understanding that are compelled by this new understanding of the power of the gospel to transform life. Firstly the church becomes missional by its very nature- the kind of theology that was picked up in the Brian Smith era of College – inevitable from a missiologist- that our whole intent had to be missional. Its only 20 plus years ago but already its hard to remember the quite serious divide that existed between the established church and mission at that time. The result of hundreds of years of a tradition of Christendom. Secondly there was a profound re-understanding of what it meant for us to be a pilgrim people: ‘on a journey’ in popular parlance and that even if ‘there was an unbridgeable difference between the church and its destination- the reign of God- it is called to flesh that out already in the here and now’⁵ we needed to keep walking towards its vision of what the Kingdom of God might look like lived out in human community. What a mission! What a road to walk! That brought another profound change, one which doesn’t seem to be reflected in the pages of the Baptist I might add, about how one viewed ‘the world’. Rather than being the hostile power outside of the church, the world was that with which we had solidarity and was where God was active. Rather than being just the waiting room for the hereafter, the church was to be liberating people in the present while proclaiming God’s coming reign.

³ D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, 1991), 371.

⁴ Bosch, 372.

⁵ Bosch, 374.

These trends I've just outlined, represent the reverse of something seen a century earlier and a movement which had profound effect on the work of transzend/NZBMS for the large part of the 20th Century- the shrinking boundaries of the gospel. Its important to detail this as a lesson for the future. In the 1830s 25% of the British Parliament was evangelical Christian. Its part of why you have to understand the Treaty of Waitangi as a document trying to live out some principles of the KOG. The man who drafted the principles of the treaty was an evangelical, an abolitionist and married to William Wilberforce's sister named James Stephen. Here is his instruction to William Hobson, charged with formulating a treaty

All dealings with the Aborigines for their Lands must be conducted on the same principles of sincerity, justice, and good faith as must govern your transactions with them for the recognition of Her Majesty's Sovereignty in the Islands. Nor is this all. They must not be permitted to enter into any Contracts in which they might be ignorant and unintentional authors of injuries to themselves. You will not, for example, purchase from them any Territory the retention of which by them would be essential, or highly conducive, to their own comfort, safety or subsistence. The acquisition of Land by the Crown for the future Settlement of British Subjects must be confined to such Districts as the Natives can alienate without distress or serious inconvenience to themselves. To secure the observance of this rule will be one of the first duties of their official protector.⁶

What a great pity the intention wasn't honoured by those who followed and probably a great pity that it was translated overnight by Henry Williams and his son. Perhaps one good lesson for mission into the future comes from this- take time and care to translate well and properly. This simply illustrates how Christians of that day saw faith impinging markedly on how they did business and politics- and in fact saw politics as one way of responding to the prayer of 'your kingdom come' The Clapham sect, to which James Stephen belonged was incredibly powerful and lead

⁶ <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/treaty/read-the-treaty/drafting-the-treaty>.

movements like the British and Foreign Bible Society, RSPCA, Church Mission Society, the Small Debt Society (looks like a forerunner of Credit Unions) and Sunday Schools- which had in those days a very clear aim of educating the masses who could not afford school- a broad education. They were everywhere. So much so that Tomkin the historian said of them "The ethos of Clapham became the spirit of the age"⁷.

How did such a vibrant, politically involved, economically engaged, educationally committed and socially transformative movement become, within 2 generations, the initiators of the series of books called 'The Fundamentals' which is what, in the 20th Century lead us down a path to a version of mission where conversion became the sinners prayer and mental assent to a few basic propositional truths, where soul winning and church planting replaced discipling and life transformation as the outcome paradigm and social justice and social action became pejorative words describing a dichotomy of proclamation and action that is not only heretical but intellectually unintelligible, as well as practically unsustainable. That was the unfortunate trajectory of much of the evangelical church. Why? How did that happen?

I want to suggest three areas we need to look to in our history and in our theology that will help us regain that wonderful sense of being involved in what God is doing in the world, in *Missio Dei*.

Firstly. we need to rebuild our eschatology. One of the key theological changes that occurred between 1830 and 1910 was we moved from a Reformed post millennial to a pre-millennial view of the return of Christ. I know it won't come as a surprise to most of you but suspect that for the vast majority of those in our churches converted by or brought up under the influence of the 'Late Great Planet' and the 'Left Behind' series, pre millennial rapture as the dominate eschatology is just one century old - its not the traditional view of the church. Combined, as it has somehow become with the support of the nation of Israel, its led to the formations of groups of people who seem to actively seek conflict, chaos and ultimately

⁷ S. Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's circle changed Britain* (Oxford: Lion, 2010), 1.

holocaust in the Middle East as a way of precipitating the return of Christ and the rapid exit of the saved. A few of the prophecy websites one can access should strike fear into the heart of any thinking person and prayer that none of these people have opportunity to influence American foreign policy. Just as damaging has been its effect on the Church's view of the environment, climate change and a myriad of social justice issues from fair trade to trafficking. Here's the issue in plain English. If what God is really concerned about is your eternal soul and not the totality of your life on this planet, if the ultimate goal of creation is annihilation of physical being and some kind of disembodied spirit existence 'up there' in the sky, if the second coming is 'just around the corner' so there is no time to put right the wrongs of human oppression, abuse and structural marginalization. If that's what we really believe stop listening to me now, rush out, spend all you have and start pleading with people in street corners. No takers? One of the enduring puzzlements of my life is that those who seem most heavily into this pre millennial doctrine (at least the North American version of it) are often the largest accumulators of stocks, bonds and other accoutrements designed to give security for the future. There is some kind of dissonance in this. I do not believe this is the Biblical view of the future nor the mandate for the present.

Irrespective of what we understand of the eschaton, we know that on judgement day the questions are not going to be about our grasp of substitutionary atonement, election and free will, or inerrancy. We have very clear guidance from Jesus himself on that. Look at Matthew 25 about the sheep and the goats or Matthew 5 around those hard hitting sayings called the beatitudes. Revelation and its wonderful cyclic exploration of the present/future for the church in troubled times is not designed to give us commentary on the hairstyles of the apocalyptic angels but on the fact that 'no matter what' we can trust God and ultimately God loves and makes us God's own people'. And it is knowing that which enables us to go to the bleakest of situations and tackle some of the appallingly unjust systems that deny a full life, and sometimes life itself, to millions of people. It is clear that this is what is required of us as followers of Jesus. We are not to wait for God to put it all to rights

in some distant, yet to break through future. Of course we are not likely to achieve all we see as possible and yes, we are not to labour under the delusion that we will bring heaven to earth through our well intentioned efforts - no more than precipitating conflict in Palestine is going to bring Jesus back. But pray for and work for the kingdom on earth we must. When all we have to offer the poor is food in some distant heaven and all we give the oppressive master is tacit support for their evil by saying nothing in the face of thoughtless injustice we feed opiate to them – and to ourselves.

Interestingly, there is little in our history books that indicates the depth of controversy that many have existed in our churches and thus in our mission over the last 125 years. In his rather quiet and gentle stirring of the pot in Vol 2 of our history Ayson Clifford concludes his brief summary of an early skirmish from 1884 onwards by saying ‘Time was not kind to either of the two schools. The horror of the First World War put paid to the Post Millennial belief that things would get better and better until the Day of the Lord. The predictions and date-fixing of many Pre-millennialists were falsified by events’⁸

Secondly.

It is time we got real about gender, sexuality and power. I note with interest two things. Firstly: Of the multitude of social ills to which the Clapham sect addressed itself, gender inequality was notably missing. Maybe, that is why its very powerful social impacts dissipated in a little over a generation. I also note that if I had to point to any weakness in Bosch’s work its failure to note the role of women. This is something also observed by Sugden⁹ It shows how its easy to miss that which is right in front of us. Development theory of today is pretty clear that intergenerational development is best sustained by training women. The results of a study of ninety-six countries from 1960 to 1985 showed clearly the economic

⁸ A. Clifford, *A Handfull of Grain. Vol 2.* (Wellington: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society, 1982), 102.

⁹ C. Sugden, ‘Placing Critical Issues in Relief’ in W. & Saayman, *Mission in Bold Humility* (pp. 139-150). (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 139-150, 140.

advantage of education for girls; increasing their numbers at the primary level of education leads to greater long-term economic prosperity than that of boys at the same level.¹⁰

The second thing I notice is that NZBMS is built on the backs of women. From the very outset the first missionaries were women. In our first century we list 126 missionaries. 80 of them are women, 43 of them single women¹¹ 3 Single men. Our first Missionary, Rosalie Macgeorge was a trained teacher and able speaker and had served in many departments of the church's life. She was described 'as young woman of fine appearance, strong character and deep devotion to her Lord'¹² and she was in her mid twenties when in 1886, the year after The New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society was formed, she was commissioned and sent from Hanover Street carrying 'the full confidence of those who send you in Christ's name'¹³ by Alfred North who pulled no punches as to the difficulties and deprivations she was going to. Clearly a person facing, 'a tax and drain on nervous energy, the sickness of heart from hope deferred and constant toil and anguish of heart' was not going to be some kind of second class citizen requiring the headship of a man. She was good looking but she was tough too. She lived that out, showing great courage in going as the first missionary ever to Narayangage and commencing work, with no-one in active physical support. It needs to be noted further that she determined early on to be self supporting 'to set an example to Indian Christians who were prone to expect support from missions'.¹⁴ In 1887 Rosalie was joined by the second NZBMS missionary, Annie Newcombe, an Australian who, similarly strong in person, had been so determined about her new views on Baptism, formed while studying for the LMS that she was forced to quit the LMS despite the fact this shattered 'the whole purpose of

¹⁰ A. Benavot, 'Education, gender and Economic Development: A Cross Cultural Study' in *Sociology of Education* (1989 Vol 62), 14-32, 14.

¹¹ S.E. Edgar, *Toward the Sunrise*. Wellington: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society, 1985),273

¹² Edgar, 7.

¹³ Edgar, 8.

¹⁴ Edgar, 13.

her life'¹⁵ The third missionary to offer was Hopestill Pillow from Oxford Terrace. Both she and Rosemary were to die in the field within 7 years of commencing their work.

But as you look through that list of names in tranzsend's history, there is a procession of talented, professional, dedicated and incredibly strong women who lead groups, preached, taught, planned, nurtured and guided, wrote, inspired and enlarged the work of NZBMS/tranzsend *on the field*. Please note the emphasis here – 'on the field'. Incredible! And how many women did we have lead our churches, guide the union or mission society during that time in NZ? A very few. At the entrance to Carey College we have the picture of the first intake of ministerial students to the College- and there is a woman in among them. The token female for the next 50 years or so judging by the lack of women in the ministerial lists over that time. Slowly improving now BUT the whole issue of gender equality is not just about stats of those who serve in some kind of recognised authority. It goes to the heart of what we preach, and what is still preached in our churches about submission, about women not being quite wise enough to lead. Read my facebook entry about an sad but true article in *Christianity Today*¹⁶ where a woman who has been a senior advisor to special envoys, ambassadors to the UN and a speechwriter for senior government officials in the USA sits through a number of home group Bible Studies where a study on marriage instructs women to appreciate the desire of men to analyse and give counsel to them and quotes a series of verses that together suggest women are a bit stupid and need help to figure out life. She quotes 'I think men are more aware than women of their tendency to sin,' one of the men suggested. 'Maybe they can use this wisdom to help guide their wives.'¹⁷ The words of a Tui ad come to mind 'Yeah, right!'

Now its true that I probably have this stuff in my genetic makeup. My parents weren't always Baptist. When newly married and in

¹⁵ Edgar, 10.

¹⁶ J.C. Gates, 'Woman as Folly'. *Christianity Today*: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/augustweb-only/41.11.0.html> - retrieved August 14, 2010.

¹⁷ Gates, 'Woman as Folly'.

church my mother wanted to ask a question of a visiting missions speaker, she was told she had to ask through her husband. My father was so incensed that he suggested they leave the church and go somewhere else. They did. They became Baptist because his reading of Baptist theology intimated they believed in the equality and priesthood of all believers. Good theory not always worked out in practice.

In my present line of work I get to lead a research team that does occasional reviews of our Christian Commitment work in various places around the world. The key focus of our global research is the effect our church programs are having. Its part of building a case on the efficacy and even advantage of Faith Based Development programs. Given the reluctance of government and global institutions to fund anything to do with religion its an important piece of work. One very effective and extremely well integrated program WV is in the area of HIV/AIDS called Channels of Hope. Its very good at equipping pastors to deal with the multitude of issues that circle this disease. The physiology of the disease, judgmental attitudes, stigma, care of the dying, child headed households, grand parenting for a lost generation etc. Its all aimed to equip the church to be effective in their community and demonstrate communal faith in very practical ways. To begin with the program used the ABC of intervention. A for abstinence. B for being faithful and C for condoms. Of course there are some issues with some churches around condoms- and that has contributed to tens of thousands of deaths alone - BUT the problem with all three of these things is that the women have no power to insist on any of them AND the reason that powerlessness exists is the ongoing teaching of the church about the submission of women to men. I'm not going to try and join all the dots here as it would take too long, and we're talking more about contribution to, rather than attribution to, but its not difficult to demonstrate the complicity of the doctrine of submission in deadly disease here. Even in NZ, you'd hope that the horrifying statistics on family violence and related issues would make us reassess what and how we are preaching. Apparently not. And we wonder why young, well educated, savvy women searching for God, for purpose, and with a hope that their lives will add to humanity in some significant way,

come into our churches, hear sexist interpretations of scripture, see mostly male authority figures and observe the less than invisible family hierarchy, struggle to suck it up in their determination to follow Jesus or eventually give it away as some kind of anachronistic tool of oppression.

The Southern Baptist denomination have passed resolutions preventing women from pastoral leadership in their churches in the USA, have insisted that mission staff sign confessions of faith that support that particular abomination and yet happily continue to support the rapidly expanding house churches in China, more than half of whom are led by women. One suspects that the women in leadership in these house groups is a simple result of non hierarchy in such groups. A good reason for us to consider why that might be an important way to develop church in the future. If you want more in depth study around this whole area then one of our modern single women missionaries, Beulah Wood has some great material on the issue¹⁸. Of course these controversies around gender are closely related to other discriminations historically practiced or presently supported. The findings of a recent study in Europe that ‘Overall, the results of the empirical data are clear: even though the Christian religions preach brotherhood, charity and empathy with the weaker members of society, members of these faiths often do not follow this message. On the contrary, they typically hold rather more prejudiced views towards a number of groups – in particular, women and homosexuals, but also Jews, Muslims, immigrants and ethnic minorities, and even, to some extent, homeless and disabled people.’¹⁹

I was interested in listening last weekend to Helen Clark in Christchurch Cathedral talking about the millennium development goals. One of those goals is around maternal and child health and a figure known as MMR- the maternal mortality rate. The number of mothers who die in pregnancy or birth per 100,000 women. In Afghanistan its something like 1600, in the USA its 13 and in

¹⁸ B. Wood, *Side by Side* (Bangalore: SIACS, 2007) and *Families in the Plan of God: A Theology for South Asia* (Bangalore: SAICS, 2010).

¹⁹ B. Kuper, *Religion and Prejudice in Europe: New Empirical Findings*. London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 2010), 10.

Ireland its 0. Globally the average was 480 and the goal was to reduce that by 75%- to 120. At this point its still at 422. Perhaps she pulled her punches because she was in the Cathedral but its not difficult to see that this statistic is so unacceptably high because of the lack of education given to women, the secondary place in society given to women and the lack of economic resource given to women all of which is supported by cultures whose religious underpinning is the subservience of women.

If there is anything we should learn from our history that could inform us into our future in mission its that the gospel that restores us to a right relationship with God restores us to a right relationship to each other. To not restore that Biblical equality where there is no slave nor free, no Jew or Gentile, no male or female, is to fall short of the mission of God. *Missio Dei* is a mission that requires us to face our failures in the past with humility, to recognise our inadequacies in the present but to never the less go forward in humility too. To not do so, is to inject the oppression and denigration of women with the opiate of structural sexism and to fail both ourselves and our mission

That brings me to my third, final point: redefining salvation.

We need to go forward in bold humility as part of the mission of God in integral mission. We need nothing less than a total restoration of what salvation is all about. In the words of the Micah declaration

.. the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and

political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task.²⁰

Anything less is opiate!

This is what Lausanne 2 described as ‘the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world’ Effectively this means reinvesting the term ‘salvation’ with all its original intended consequences. Salvation that impinges on social, economic, health and educational areas as well as addressing the yearning of the human soul, the desire to be connected with the creator and sustainer of life itself. It may not be without significance that the propounder of that pervasive pragmatic heresy of the homogeneous unit principle of church growth, Donald McGavren, said once that ‘Salvation is a vertical relationship....which issues in horizontal relationships....The vertical must not be displaced by the horizontal. Desirable as social ameliorations are, working for them must not be substituted for the biblical requirements of ‘salvation’²¹ This is of course not only a false dichotomy but is partly related to the eschatology I referred to earlier. And If we’re just sorting vertical relationships as we pluck people out of the dark ocean of sin and, shivering in the miserable and cold little lifeboat called the Church while we wait for the liner JC to come blazing across the horizon and rescue us, I suppose that quote of his makes sense. BUT it does not gel at all if Salvation is not ‘out’ of this world but ‘of this world’. Paul’s soaring affirmations of the cosmic Christ in Colossians 1;15-16 says it all: Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. Everything was created by him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him.

²⁰ Micah Network, M. (2008). *Integral Mission*. Retrieved August 14, 2010, from <http://www.micahnetwork.org/en/integral-mission>

²¹ Bosch, 398

Tranzsend/NZBMS has lived that integration out for most of its life. From the outset Rosemary and Hopestill were involved in education and medicine. We've routinely invested in literature, in hospitals, health clinics, mobile Bible Schools, translation work, rotating loan schemes, further education, support of children in hostels for educational purposes. We've even helped build infrastructure – remember Chris Sorrell in PNG helping get airstrips built so that people could be rapidly moved to hospitals and goods could be transported. Right now we are involved in major projects in Bangladesh in the TCDC where key church workers are put in place in villages and they run a school, help with agriculture, educate women and lead community discussions on all sorts of things from family planning to starting small business and the ins and outs of the dowry system. It's wonderful integral mission. We have a major and growing series of projects in South Asia in jute bag production that allows those wanting to escape from the sex industry to find freedom. What an amazing team Kerry and Annie are building up there. Along with that is other industry and new employment options started by Ian and Colleen and Peter and Leonora. It is an extensive list. Or the business that supplies generators and is seeing its solid witness through ethical business bear fruit along with the endless questions constantly asked of the staff about their motivation. These things are not precursors to the gospel. They are the gospel, they represent the signs of salvation- or they do if you see salvation as restoration of life in its fullness. All this we have done well in our history and its good to be taking it into our future. We've learnt a lot and we have a lot to offer in this whole area in the manner in which we've approached the whole issue of business as mission and Development as mission with integrity of purpose and holism as our theology.

Integral mission means we will stand on the side of the poor on the issue of climate change injustice. It means that we will take care of refugees who risk their lives in little boats to escape the horror and helplessness of countries torn by conflict and persecution. It means we will support the millennium development goals and human rights because they align with our hopes for the Kingdom.

I want, however, to finish with a challenge. There is one area where we seem, as a denomination to be silent and, sadly sometimes, seemingly vocally resistant to the voice and the work of God in this integral mission area. Interestingly, it's not in the MDGs either. Maybe it's thought to be a bridge too far. That's in the whole field of peacemaking. We know that statistics – or we should do. I've quoted them often enough, although they are a bit out of date now: This was the story in 1990.

- 471 major wars since 1700
- 83 major wars since 1960
- 12.5 million killed in wars between 1960 and 1990 (84% civilian)
- International peace keeping forces cost over US\$265,000,000 pa.
- Military expenditure: US\$950,000,000,000 pa. (\$1.8 million per minute) 5.7% of GWP.

More recent figures suggest that military spending is now 1.531 trillion dollars per annum, a 6% rise in 2009, US\$225 for every man woman and child on the planet and 2.7% of the world GDP, 46% of which is spent by the USA.²² This is simply obscene and an ongoing crime against the poor to allow this to continue.

What would happen if we could lead a movement of peacemakers that took just a week's worth of that military spending and got it invested in water and sanitation, in health clinics, in primary schools, in job creation, in environmental concerns. It would be a transformed world! It might be accompanied by a blessing as well, 'God blesses those people who make peace. They will be called his children!' says Matthew 5. Or as Peterson puts it 'You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are and your place in God's family.' How to make that happen is perhaps the greatest challenge of global mission in our time. Our failure to effectively change the script on war to this point in human history

²² *Global Issues* (2010, July 7). Retrieved August 14, 2010, from World Military Spending: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending>.

points to our own history and failures too. We have a long way to go in our exploration of unity in the church. One of the things I loved about Bosch was his constant call to dialogue, to hear the voice of the other, to work together in ecumenical harmony and as a sacrament and sign to the rest of the world.²³

There are many more things I could add about the challenges we face in the future and the untapped resources from our past that we can take with us on that journey. I finish with the words of Jesus and simply say – As his followers, is this what the world should expect of us as we join Jesus in mission dei, God's mission to the world, in all the bold humility we can muster. A world, numbed by opiates other than those seen by Marx deserves true religion as an all embracing wake up call to life in its fullness.

Luke 7

¹⁸⁻¹⁹John's disciples reported back to him the news of all these events taking place. He sent two of them to the Master to ask the question, 'Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting?'

²⁰The men showed up before Jesus and said, 'John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting?''¹⁶

²¹⁻²³In the next two or three hours Jesus healed many from diseases, distress, and evil spirits. To many of the blind he gave the gift of sight. Then he gave his answer: 'Go back and tell John what you have just seen and heard:

The blind see,
 The lame walk,
 Lepers are cleansed,
 The deaf hear,
 The dead are raised,
 The wretched of the earth
 have God's salvation hospitality extended to them.

²³ Bosch, 374.

‘Is this what you were expecting? Then count yourselves fortunate!’

A faith that reflects the risen and living Jesus is not an opiate. Its a totally transformative experience that constantly shows glimpses of the Kingdom of God and life in its fullness. That’s what being part of *missio dei*, God’s mission in bold humility, is all about. May our journey in the next 125 years reflect that reality.

Rob Kilpatrick
World Vision Australia

Reviews

Jens Zimmerman and Brian Gregor (Eds.). *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*. Eugene, OR.: Pickwick, 2010. (235 pp) [ISBN 978-1-60899-420-5]

Promptly within introducing this particular collection of essays published in the *Princeton Theological Monograph Series*, a provocative question is posed: ‘Does it not become apparent that human dignity requires a transcendent reference point?’ (p. xi). This question is a central one, which serves as the conditioning question to explore the social and political thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Indeed, the proliferation of wonder and worry as the world wrestles to delimit answers to questions of life, meaning, and flourishing are in response to the panoply of scientific advancement and persisting global atrocities that either constrain or perhaps undermine current conceptions of human being (becoming). Yet, the authors in this compilation are somewhat hopeful that the ‘renewed openness to the voices of religious traditions within academic discussions regarding society and culture’ (xii) will afford the opportunity for Bonhoeffer’s humanistic orientation to not only bear fruit in relation to but also radically reconstruct a vision of responsibility toward the other—‘affirm[ing] human dignity through a recovery of classical culture and ... in harmony with Christian faith’ (p. 3).

The collection of essays is ordered in three sections, which respectively address Bonhoeffer’s humanist orientation, ecclesial concept of sociality, and interrelated themes of discipleship, conformation, and responsibility. These three sections represent a pattern of thought moving the reader through the basis of Bonhoeffer’s humanism through the application of such thought and speech. The question, however, that I asked throughout the

reading is: have the essayists adequately anchored the particular Christian humanism of Bonhoeffer in a theological ground or have they mistakenly relied upon some sort of ambiguous principle or abstract philosophical conceptual tool? My response to this question is positive.

Take for example the first section, 'Bonhoeffer's Humanism', John W. de Gruchy does a masterful job at weaving together Bonhoeffer's Christology and his 'affirmation of life in its fullness amidst struggle and suffering' (p. 17). Indeed, in this first chapter, human dignity takes centre stage, though that stage is built upon the Incarnation and Cross. In this place, one is directed toward God's 'No' which is known only in light of God's 'Yes' that surrounds it, in Jesus Christ. Here, De Gruchy affirms Bonhoeffer's humanism is rightly and richly constructed from this pattern where the Divine 'Yes,' affords an understanding of creation, becoming, honour and flourishing in contrast to and in opposition against death, suffering, degradation and resignation (p. 18). As de Gruchy concludes, the pattern of this peculiar theological foundation has profound implications for it has the capacity to fashion a *Christian* humanism that may 'struggle for truth and justice against dehumanizing power, ... always affirming human goodness against perversity, hope against despair, and life against death' (p. 24).

Jens Zimmerman, confirming de Gruchy but moving beyond, argues that such interpretations of Christian humanism '[are] not just useful but *needed*' (p. 26) Pulling for a return to Patristic thought, which 'could be summed up as an all-embracing humanism,' (p. 27) Zimmerman considers the significance of the Incarnation. He reveals Bonhoeffer's sensitivity to this doctrine as vital in its capacity to 'define God's relation to the world and the Christian's being in the world' (p. 30). Accordingly, Bonhoeffer writes, '[Jesus] is not *a* human being, but *the* human being. What happened to him happens to human beings. It happens to all and therefore to us' (p. 31). Consequently, Zimmerman explores the concept of *participation* or the *ethical* which extends from this confessions to both those in and those out of the Christian community, for 'Christ [is] the ontological center of humanity, who

thus links the new and old human self and therefore also church and world' (p. 33).

Accordingly, what began with a rigorous survey of the theological foundation of Bonhoeffer's humanism turned quickly toward application—an application seeking to illumine the connection between church and world. The essence of the following essays may be considered as a reiteration of the above: from Christ everything has its being, and to Christ everything will return, including the becoming human who, in participation with Christ living with and for others, may become *truly human* (p. 26). That task, therefore, is to, as humans, 'belong together—irrevocably and undividedly,' thus, 'the proclamation of [Gospel] goes hand in hand with social activism for those in need' (p. 64).

The focus of the second section, 'Bonhoeffer on Sociality and the Church', follows well from the previous, now focusing on the gathering of the whole - forming the church in and for the world. Essential to Bonhoeffer's sociality, as Clifford J. Green indicates, is the assertion that 'it is in communities that range from family to humanity-as-a-whole that human persons, individuals to be sure, come into being and flourish' (p. 73). Accordingly, sociality demands humility, as one encounters another who ought not to be conceived as 'the other' to be opposed but as the one whom we are commissioned, in participation with Christ, to lived with and for. Such a notion is not just isolated to individuals but also to the whole of the cosmos. After all, 'reconciliation *has* taken place and ... this must throw light on every part of theology' (p. 91).

Here, as Kirsten Busch Nielsen argues, the delimitation of Bonhoeffer's sociality is bound to no abstract ideal concerning institutions and relationships but to Incarnation—'Bonhoeffer emphasizes that it is God who reconciles the world to himself' (p. 91). This reconciliation is the *reason* for sociality and responsibility. This reality may be understood in its actuality 'from the standpoint of the gospel and of Christ' (p. 104), rather as one assesses the claims of the church community, which, as Barry Harvey writes, 'forms an alternative mode of human sociality, that is, a distinctive condition or social context that gives rise to a set of institutions and relationships within and through which a group of people are

formed (or more precisely, within and through which Christ takes form in them)' (p. 115). Indeed, the second section of this book is critical to understand what Bonhoeffer's humanism may lead to, rather whom may be formed by the truly human, Christ.

The final section, 'Discipleship, Conformation, and Responsibility', may be summed up with Brian Gregor's words, 'Faith is not merely cognitive relation of assent to correct doctrine but is rather a whole-person response ... of following after Christ in concrete, everyday existence' (p. 153). Indeed, this is key to the whole of the work. The essays included in this section, as well as the whole, are hinged upon this call for obedient response to Christ—for 'an existential *collision*' resulting in becoming that which we are not at the outset, truly human (p. 161). So, here, this section turns to the ethics of following, which is the real consequence of the encounter with Christ. This ethics, that is such embodied following, results in a conformation with the crucified Christ that may reorient one's vision, ones very being-in-action, 'toward the actual lives and needs of [the other]' (p. 188).

Such an orientation considers the responsibility to follow after Christ comes with a simultaneous responsibility to be one for the other. As Ulrick Becker Nissen writes, quoting Clifford J. Green, 'accepting this responsibility for other human beings or for entire communities or group of communities' (p. 196). Such responsibility, however, cannot resort to simply considering the question and pursuing an answer to *doing* good. Rather, responsibility, as indicated by Bonhoeffer's *other-ly* ethics, is about responding with thanksgiving to the will, or reality, of God—'represent[ing] Christ before human beings, but at the same time [representing] human beings before Christ' (p. 201). This is such a profound and liberating ethics, not hinging upon the adjudication of abstract ideas/principles but *Verantwortung* [accountable] to the Other—God and humanity. Nissen, quoting John Howard Yoder, comments, 'This is not about some legalistic approach to copying Jesus, but rather about participating in Christ. We are already part of his body; we do not become so through following him. Following Jesus is the result, not the means, of our fellowship with

Christ. It is the form of Christian freedom and now a new law' (p. 207).

Though I may have erred on the side of a positive review for this book, I am convinced the few shortcomings may be carefully overlooked. As noted earlier, I began reading this book with a particular question in mind: have the essayists adequately anchored the particular Christian humanism of Bonhoeffer in a theological ground or have they mistakenly relied upon some sort of ambiguous principle or abstract philosophical conceptual tool? I strongly believe the authors have carefully considered Bonhoeffer's own commitment to a Christ-focused theology, which not only forms the basis of an anthropology that liberates such consideration from any static reduction of being but also constructs a vision of human action that embraces a particular becoming in concert with Christ. Ultimately, this is an important selection of essays for any one interested in the writings and vision of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Moreover, it is a vital work for those who may want to better understand the meaning and implication of *participation in Christ*.

Ashley Moyses

Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary.
The Calvin 500 Series. Edited by David W. Hall. Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2010. (xxii + 566 pp.) [ISBN: 978-1-59638-096-7]

Throughout 2009 Christians around the world celebrated the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Genevan Reformer, John Calvin. Alongside such celebrations were the requisite publishing ventures. The closest thing to an official celebration of the quincentenary was the Calvin500 Project, an international, interdenominational, and interdisciplinary celebration of John Calvin's life, theology, and significance. The Calvin500 Project hosted two concurrent conferences in Geneva and commissioned an eight volume series of books entitled 'The Calvin 500 Series.' The conferences were directed by Dr David Hall, senior pastor of Midway Presbyterian

Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, and sponsored by a number of significant American Presbyterian Seminaries such as Westminster Theological Seminary, Westminster Seminary California, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Erskine Theological Seminary.

The two concurrent conferences run by the Calvin500 Project consisted of the Tribute Conference, a 4-day international symposium with leading scholars in the historic *Auditoire* in Geneva (July 6-9, 2009); and the Commemorating Calvin Conference, a 5-day international symposium with leading ministers in Calvin's church, St Pierre Cathedral (July 5-9, 2009). The articles comprising *Tributes to John Calvin* come directly from those presented at the Tribute Conference. 'The essays in *Tributes to John Calvin: A Celebration of His Quincentenary* illuminate Calvin's times, thought and legacy, and provide a celebratory tribute to one of the most influential people in history. This book commemorates the quincentenary of Calvin's birth (July 10, 1509) and attests to the remarkably enduring influence of his life and work' (from the Dust Jacket).

Tributes to John Calvin consists of twenty-three essays from some of today's leading Calvin scholars and Reformed theologians, arranged into three broad sections: 1) Calvin's Times: introducing Calvin the man, his times, and his context; 2) Calvin's Topics: spanning a diverse array of key themes from his life and thought; and 3) Calvin Today and Tomorrow: in which various essays survey Calvin's ongoing influence and importance. Most of the essays are newly commissioned pieces and advance the scholarly discussion on Calvin and Calvinism considerably.

Most of the contributors to the volume are well known Calvin and Reformed scholars, such as Robert Kingdon ('Calvin and Ecclesiastical Discipline'), Henri Blocher ('Calvin the Frenchman'), Douglas Kelly ('The Catholicity of Calvin's Theology'), R. Scott Clark ('Calvin's Principle of Worship'), Anthony Lane ('Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance Revisited'), Andrew McGowan ('John Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture'), Michael Horton ('Calvin's Eucharistic Ecclesiology'), Richard Gamble ('Calvin Bibliography'), Darryl Hart ('Consistently Contested: Calvin Among Nineteenth-Century Reformed Protestants in the United States,'), Bruce

McCormack ('Union with Christ in Calvin's Theology: Grounds for a Divinization Theory?'), and Herman Selderhuis ('See You in Heaven: Calvin's View of Life, Death, and Eternal Life'). Other less well-known but no less accomplished contributors also appear such as John Witte Jr ('Calvin the Lawyer'), Isabelle Graessle ('Calvin and Women: Between Irritation and Admiration'), Richard Burnett (John Calvin on Sacred and Secular History'), and David Hall ('Calvin's Principles of Governance: Homology in Church and State'). Each contributor brought to the conference (and now to this volume) a distinct specialty and expertise, which enriched the volume as it spanned cultural studies, biblical themes, historical criticism, and theological construction. While not at the Conference, Albert Mohler Jr provides a brief Foreword for the work in which he reflects upon Calvin's continued relevance for church and society today.

One is not able to mention every essay in a critical review such as this but several stand out for explicit comment. John Witte Jr, Professor of Law at Emory University School of Law, breezed into the Conference, known to some but not to others who were there. His paper on 'Calvin the Lawyer' stands out as one of the clearest and compelling of the conference (and thus of the volume), possibly because the theme he took up was not a common one in Calvin studies. Witte presents Calvin the jurist and takes the reader on a tour of Calvin's Geneva with its 1541 Ecclesiastical Ordinances, the 1542 Edict of the Lieutenant, and the 1543 Ordinances of Offices and Officers, constitutional laws that together defined the new structure, power, and relations of church and state in Protestant Geneva. Calvin went on to draft major new ordinances on marriage, children, social welfare, public morality, and education – more than a hundred new ordinances in total. Witte then perceptively deals with two themes in Calvin's thought – the balancing act between liberty and law, and that between church and state. This essay has the clarity of a lawyer's mind and is compelling reading.

Unfortunately, and inexplicably, one of Henry Blocher's two presentations at the conference was not included in this volume, 'Calvin on Divine Election.' This is unfortunate for I found it one

of the best presentations of the entire conference from one of the best Calvin and Reformed scholars of our time. The essay included in this volume, 'Calvin the Frenchman,' is a delightful and winsome piece of work which gently reminds North Americans, and the rest of us, that Calvin is first and foremost a Frenchman, and understanding *that* goes a long way to understanding *him*. However, it is the essay not included here that was the real gem. Here Blocher challenged popular readings of Calvin's doctrine of election and presented a sophisticated, and to my opinion, largely accurate, and more evangelical reading of election, its place in Calvin's thought and, importantly, its function. Perhaps we shall see this essay appear in print in a journal at some stage.

The doctrine of assurance lies at the heart of many Reformed debates and Calvin's own work has been mined many times in order to resource such work. Having written on Calvin's doctrine of assurance in a major journal article in 1979, renowned Calvin scholar, Anthony Lane, here revisits his earlier arguments and calls aspects of it into question, before presenting what he believes is a far more accurate assessment of the issue. Lane clearly shows how Calvin considered assurance to be of the essence of faith and how this was coordinated with various other aspects of this theology, notably with the doctrine of election. Throughout the essay Lane shows Calvin the pastor-scholar and not the cold, heartless man he is often portrayed as being. Like everything Lane writes, this is a well researched and well written essay, by one who has a unique familiarity with Calvin's work.

A conference on Calvin without an essay on his doctrine of Holy Scripture would be incomplete and thus Andrew McGowan took up this theme and continued to substantiate his recent work on the topic. In short, McGowan argues that Calvin held to a high view of Scripture which may best be summarized around the theological doctrine of infallibility. He did not, however fit neatly into what became known as the doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy. To substantiate such claims, correct claims in my opinion, McGowan examines Calvin's overall approach to Scripture, the inner dogmatic structure of the *Institutes*, and his understanding of the relationship between Word and Spirit. In a conference dominated by

conservative Reformed and Presbyterian theologians, and representing the most significant Presbyterian seminaries in the United States, McGowan's remarks were perhaps the most controversial of the conference. Until recently McGowan was adjunct professor of theology at several American Presbyterian Seminaries, however, due to the views represented in this essay, he now spends most of his time in his home country and on the continent.

Two final essays of note are worth mentioning. First, Bruce McCormack continued to outline his objections to any form of divinization theory in Calvin's theology, and thus in Reformed theology more generally. McCormack shows the robust forensicism of Calvin's doctrine of justification, a doctrine which, in McCormack's mind, leaves little room for anything approaching a divinization theory. He then examines the central role the doctrine of our union with Christ plays in Calvin's theology and seeks to account for the often noticed fact that Calvin treats of sanctification before justification in the *Institutes*. Second, Herman Selderhuis concludes the volume with his essay on Calvin's eschatology. At the conference Selderhuis handed out Calvin 'mints' before his presentation, saying these may aid us all in keeping awake. While the candy was nice, he needn't have worried. As one of the foremost Calvin scholars working today, Selderhuis provides a pithy summary of Calvin's views on life, death, and eternal life, drawn principally from Calvin's letters and the Psalms, before concluding the essay with insightful comments on the way in which Calvin's theology became practice. The biographical section of this essay is what may interest many readers, as we learn of the sadness and the great emotional effect the suffering and death of many of Calvin's friends had on him. He writes of his tears over the death of Claude Féray, a decagon and good friend of his, we learn that he was an 'emotional wreck' after the death of his dear son Jacques. However, it was the death of his wife, Idelette, which severely affected Calvin. After her death he claimed he had lost his best friend and his most cherished supporter. He once wrote that he would have to continue life in her absence as 'no more than half a man, since God recently took my wife to Himself' (p. 541).

Several of the essays (and presentations) are torpid and predictable affairs. R. Scott Clark argues yet again for a strict principle of worship whereby ‘only that may be done which must be done, and what must be done is that which is commanded by the Word’ (p. 269). He shows how this was Calvin’s practice, albeit with some practical adaptability on his part for the sake of the unity of the church, in dialogue with Luther, Bucer, the Anglicans, and other who did not share his understanding of the second commandment for public worship. Similarly, Douglas Kelly’s essay on the catholicity of Calvin’s thought presents the now familiar argument that predestination is not the centre of his thought and does not act as a controlling motif; rather, it is the ‘catholic’ nature of his theology that forms the integrating centre. By ‘catholic’ Kelly has in mind the totality of Scriptural truth. By means of extensive quotations from Calvin’s *opera* Kelly seeks to justify his claim and put to bed all other counter arguments. Likewise, in ‘Calvinism in Asia,’ Jae Sung Kim simply narrates a history of Calvinism in Asia, especially in Korea, and moves through a general geographical overview of the impact and permutations of Calvinism. While not an unimportant essay, it does seem out of place in this volume and would perhaps have been better presented elsewhere.

While stilted and one of the less engaging papers of the conference due to its subject matter, Richard Gamble’s ‘Calvin Bibliography’ provides an important resource and he is to be thanked for tirelessly compiling a bibliography of books published on John Calvin from the year 2000 to 2009. ‘The method employed is a quick look at the overall flow of Calvin’s life, followed by a topical analysis of Calvin as theologian, social reformer, and churchman’ (p. 419). More than an annotated bibliography, this is a research essay in its own right and is extremely useful in gaining a comprehensive ‘state of the play’ of Calvin studies over the last decade.

Having been privileged to listen to these essays presented first hand, in Calvin’s historical *Auditoire*, it is now a pleasure to have these in print and collected in one volume for further use and reference. The editor, David Hall, has done a superb job in commissioning the papers in the first place, and seeing them

through to completion in such a fine manner. Much of the presentations appear to have had only minor editorial adjustments to them compared to their original delivery, giving the essays a lively feel and tone; a very good move indeed. *Tributes to John Calvin* offers its readers a generous serving of Calvin's times, themes, and significance and as such promises to be a valuable and well used resource on Calvin scholarship. Read alongside the other volumes in The Calvin 500 Series, this is a major and significant publishing venture and will undoubtedly resource Reformed scholarship until the next major celebratory milestone of Calvin's life and thought comes along.

Myk Habets

Koester, Craig R. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. (xiv + 245 pp). [ISBN 9780802829382]

To speak of 'a theology of' something is not a particularly clear statement. A number of means could be intended regardless of what area of theology a person is referring to. For example 'a theology of mission' could refer to a theological mandate to practice mission, or it could mean a theological exposition of what mission is. It could refer to mission in scripture, mission in history, mission in contemporary thought, etc. The same is true of 'a theology of pastoral care' or 'a theology of Christian leadership.' However, this use of the term theology seems to miss the mark. To speak theologically is to speak primarily about God and about his involvement with the world. This is precisely what Craig Koester has done in his work. In the preface he writes, 'To read the Gospel theologically is to ask, Who is the God about whom Jesus speaks? Who does the Gospel say that Jesus is? And how does the Gospel understand life, death, sin, and faith?' (p. ix) This is precisely what one should expect when reading a book with the title *A Theology of John's Gospel*.

In this book Koester is able to cover most areas of theological interest within John's Gospel, and he does so in a clear and logical

manner. Following this introduction he starts, naturally, with what is most foundational, both in theology and in John's Gospel (chapter two: 'God'), then he moves to the scene in which God is going to act (chapter three: 'The World and Its People'). Following this he considers the primary character in God's engagement with the world (chapter four: 'Jesus'), and the primary action taken (chapter five: 'Crucifixion and Resurrection'). Then there is a discussion on the Holy Spirit who Koester rightly recognizes as the *Paraclete* who comes to continue the work that Jesus has begun. Finally in the last two chapters he considers the life of the believer, both while Jesus is still with them and their intended life once Jesus has ascended (chapter seven: 'Faith, Present and Future' and chapter eight: 'Discipleship in Community and World'). As such Koester skillfully develops his argument not unlike one might see in a systematic theology, but while remaining committed solely to the content and character of John's account. Here the 'ugly ditch' has been filled in by Koester's superior knowledge of both Scripture and doctrine, and by the way he is able to hold both together in the relationship they were always meant to have.

Koester does not shy away from the trickier theological elements, such as the atoning death of Christ. He considers fairly the various opinions, but concludes strongly that the death of Christ in John's account is primarily a revelation of God's love for the world (pp. 108-23). John 3.16 is quoted frequently throughout the book. His constant ability to expound *theologically* and not just *exegetically* is once again the major strength here. Koester has not just given a historical analysis, nor has he simply chosen from a list of atonement models in systematic theology that might best fit John's emphasis. Instead he has read the text as it desires to be read – as inspired word that informs the church both in history and today – and because of this a greater understanding of the text and of its theological content are brought out clearly.

On a more critical note, this book offers virtually no comparative analysis between John and the synoptic Gospels. The analysis of John's Gospel is good, and goes to significant depth. One comes away with a clear picture of John's message and theology. However, some more engagement with the other Gospels would

have further highlighted the uniqueness of John's particular emphasis. Among other things Koester has tried to appreciate specifically how John's Gospel understands the theological realities of this world (the atoning work of Christ being a case in point). By comparing and contrasting John with the synoptics this goal would have been achieved even more effectively.

The book is very readable, suitable for a popular audience, and contains a number of more practical comments and examples to help 'lay' readers come to a deeper understanding of John's Gospel. Also, ideas are often repeated in later chapters and helpfully explained again in connection to another theme in the Gospel. As such it is clear that Koester is not only trying to develop a scholarly argument, but is also keen to teach content to those less familiar with academic writing. Having said this, Koester does not skimp on theological depth and scholarly engagement, making this book useful for a wide audience. Scholars, students, pastors, preachers, small group leaders, and any other interested persons could benefit from reading this book.

Ian Goodman

Sally Lloyd-Jones. Illustrated by Jago. *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007 (351 pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-31-708254]

Children's Bible's follow a pretty standard format – simple language and basic pictures. In addition they make one of two decisions; either they are simply a selection of Bible stories that are edited down to a level of comprehension for children minus the theology, or they take biblical stories and turn them into little moral vignettes. *The Jesus Storybook Bible* certainly uses language appropriate for children, but it neither merely repeats the biblical stories minus the theology or turns the stories into moralistic teachable moments.

In the acknowledgments, Lloyd-Jones mentions the formative impact the ministry of Timothy Keller has had on her, and it

certainly shows through in this work. What is unique and so compelling about *The Storybook Bible* is that over twenty-one Old Testament stories and twenty-three New Testament stories the metanarrative of Scripture is communicated by means of each micro-story. At the centre of each story is Jesus Christ, and the love of God for his creation revealed through and evident in Christ. In place of moralistic stories, Lloyd-Jones has opted to follow the Bible's own storyline and present the nature and character of God in his triune glory, centred on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and filled and empowered by the ongoing presence of God the Holy Spirit. This she manages to do in delightfully appropriate language and with a keen theological awareness of what in each story needs to be retained in order for it to actually constitute a *Bible* and not simply a storybook.

Any parent reading through Scripture with their children will know the difficulty faced when the violent texts of Scripture are encountered and how we have to either simply skip over those sections with our young children, or subtly retell them on the fly, skipping over the extreme violence inappropriate for children at this age. Lloyd-Jones is fully aware of this issue and in her selection of stories she doesn't mute significant parts of God's character by skipping over violent texts, but, rather, she softens some of the extreme violence and, importantly, puts the story once again into the larger picture of God's love, holiness, justice, and glory. She helps children (and their parents) make sense of the story in light of the rest of God's revelation. Many times she does this with a level of skill unrivalled by many preachers. One example, the day after reading the story of 'Daniel and the scary sleepover' (pp. 152-159) to my two children, I ran a preaching lab where the student preached the same text as a narrative sermon. Much of the presentation was very good, but I did recommend he reads the passage from *The Storybook Bible* and take notes on what the story really means and how it could be communicated better.

I am reading through *The Storybook Bible* with my two children, a two-year-old boy and a four-year-old girl, and a good test of the effectiveness of such a book is, I believe, to hear each of them ask me to read them a story out of it. My daughter loves the fact that

God gives us true stories of Queens and princesses, of love affairs and drama, and that God promises to send a great Prince one day to meet us in person. My son loves the soldiers and the battles, the horses and chariots, and that God is stronger than anyone and anything and that this God loves him. I love the fact that God's Word is living and active and can cut through the busy lives of little children as well as big adults and can, at the same time, speak to all of us afresh.

Illustrations in children's Bible's run two risks, they are either so magnificent they eclipse the text completely and children's attentions are drawn away from the story and to the images, or they are so poorly done they put children off the story altogether. Jago, the illustrator, has got the balance right in this book, if my two children are anything to go by. They love the illustrations – but not too much. While Reformed folk will not like the fact that Jesus is pictured throughout the book, Baptists will have no problems with such symbolic representation. The colours are bright, the format is creative, and the length of stories keeps the attention of little minds, stimulating further discussion based upon what was read.

One drawback mars the work throughout and it is this – it is too short and too many parts of Scripture are left out. One simply hopes and prays that a second volume will appear in due course that takes us through the Psalms and Proverbs, for instance, and the other parts of God's Word that still need to speak to us today. If you have young children and want to hear God speak to you through his Word as a family, then this is a God-given resource. Enjoy!

Myk Habets

The Early Preaching of Karl Barth: Fourteen Sermons with Commentary by William H. Willimon. Karl Barth and William H. Willimon. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. (xvii + 171 pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-664-23367-9]

The Early Preaching of Karl Barth is concerned with the practice of preaching and is directed to church based preachers. It is comprised of fourteen sermons selected from Barth's parish

ministry at Safenwil, which are accompanied by a commentary provided by William H. Willimon. The commentary assists the reader to make sense of the sometimes confusing expositions by highlighting the significance of the sermons against their historical context. Not only are the circumstances of the Great War and its aftermath noted, but the less known theological context is also described for the reader. This is helpful because it explains the factors which shaped Barth's theology in the earlier sermons in this collection – the influence of his liberal theological education is apparent, but wanes as Barth discovers the immanence of God in Scripture. These sermons are historically useful, as they allow us to observe Barth at a formative stage in his development as a theologian. They are also useful for shaping our own preaching, as Willimon candidly draws out the challenges that Barth's preaching presents to preachers at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This review shall pay closer attention to two sermons selected from this collection, Colossians 2.15 and Psalm 23.

An earlier sermon in the collection is on Colossians 2.15: 'Christ has led out the rulers and those with power and made a public example of them, triumphing over them' (April 8, 1917). With lucid language depicting the everyday cares and concerns of village life, Barth expounds the text as a word from God that casts these into insignificance, in the light of what God himself has done. Barth presents God's resurrection of Jesus as the crux of Easter, and his victory in the world over all that would make human existence meaningless, loveless, and purposeless. Countering any suggestions in the minds of his congregation that the case might be otherwise, he conjures up the thoughts of the forces which would prove to them to be the case. It is in this situation of human helplessness that Barth allows the force of Colossians 2.15 to speak to his church at Safenwil. The temptation to rest in religion without God is contradicted and dismissed, since human beings on their own are helpless in the face of the world's 'powers' that are arrayed against them. The remainder of this sermon exults over the triumph of God in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection – a sustained burst of rejoicing in the confidence of a new world of existence begun at this victorious moment. Significantly, Barth does not exhort his hearers to action. His chief concern from this text is that his

listeners join this triumph by being ‘spectators’ – they can be nothing more, since it is God who has acted and it is only his action that really matters. It is only in this light that they are invited to celebrate and to do good deeds.

Willimon helpfully draws attention to points of significance, especially with relation to the historical context of the sermon. Of note from this sermon’s commentary is the attention paid to the emergence of the study of the human subconscious amongst European intellectuals at this time. Within this climate, where it may be expected that Barth would direct his listeners to search for subjective experiences of God as the means of connecting with him, he instead points them to the event of the resurrection as an objective triumph of God. When considering this point, together with the fact of the Great War in Europe, Willimon’s commentary puts Barth’s message (or, for Barth more appropriately, ‘God’s word’) in stark contrast with the world in which Barth lived. Willimon highlights the note of triumph already explicit in the sermon for the reader of today.

Barth’s sermon on the twenty-third Psalm, preached almost a year later on New Year’s Day (January 1, 1919) illustrates something of the emerging creative genius of the young theologian. It also demonstrates Barth’s theology of Scripture, as it sets the text up as a word from God that stands over and against humanity. Rather than simply assuming that humanity may consider that ‘the Lord is my Shepherd’, he finds a call to repentance.

Strangely, Barth does not even mention the text he is preaching from until about a quarter of the way through his sermon. However, he utilizes a theological point of view which drives the entire sermon, which Willimon points out means that this sermon maintains ‘focus and tension throughout’ the entire monologue (p. 107). The point of view which Barth works with is the antithesis which he sets up between the opening words of the psalm, ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’, and his Swiss congregation. The first quarter of the sermon is spent developing the point of reference which stands against the affirmation of the Psalm and where Barth locates humanity as represented by the Swiss nation: believing in the paths the world had taken which led the rest of Europe into war, paths

that the defeated nations were perhaps learning to abandon. Barth does not allow his hearers to identify themselves with the affirmation of the Psalm. Instead he places them, and himself, on the other side of the antithesis, and sets on the 'psalmist's' side an imaginary figure who can articulate what it means to have the Lord as one's Shepherd. This figure is given a large portion of the sermon to speak in, almost three full pages of the book, and his words occupy the centre of the sermon. The imaginary speaker faces the temptations and assaults of living in the world, even belonging to it, while at the same time assured that he is protected and will not be overcome. He recognises his finitude and yet sees hope beyond his existence to have confidence that his short life is not lived in vain. He is able to say 'I live in the dark and unknown future as one consoled, courageous, and full of hope' (p. 95).

In the twenty-third Psalm Barth finds the reason why Christ was born: so that it would be possible for us to make the same affirmation that the psalmist made. This sermon displays a creative use of Scripture which can and should remind preachers today that Scripture is a word from God to the world. Willimon's comment sums up an important lesson for preachers: 'Perhaps I am wrong in saying that we preachers don't have enough good ideas driving our sermons. It is perhaps more true to say that we lack a theological point of view that gives us anything much of interest to see in the biblical text and say in the sermon. Bad theology breeds homiletical boredom' (p. 109). Barth's 'exposition' of Psalm 23 is a refreshing exemplar for preaching Scripture as a word from God.

Karl Barth is not a straightforward theologian to understand. *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth* helpfully shows Barth as a young preacher and allows the reader to see his later theological themes developing. Willimon's commentary provides the vital context of the young Barth and allows him to be understood and appreciated as a product of his own time transcending the paradigm set by his predecessors. The immanence of God in Scripture for Barth is clear. These sermons, more than only being of interest for the historical theologian, also entail an impressive challenge for preachers to take up and recover in their own preaching.

Chris Northcott

Mark G. McKim, *Christian Theology for a Secular Society: Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*. Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 2008. (xiii + 512 pp.) [ISBN: 978-1-59752-829-0]

McKim's *Christian Theology for a Secular Society* aims to provide a thoughtful systematic theology that takes the secular context of the West into consideration for its use in mission and ministry. To this end his book is directed to those who wish to engage with Western culture as practitioners rather than as academics. The work overall displays an awareness of the major trends in scholarship, but at times fails to adequately address certain theological issues. The greatest value that McKim's book offers is the pastoral and evangelistic insights to be drawn from theology for ministry within a secular society. He covers the traditional theological subjects including the doctrine of God, creation and sin, christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, ethics, and eschatology. Additionally, he introduces the work with three prolegomena chapters which discuss the purpose of theology, the doctrine of revelation as the source of Christian theology, and a discussion on contextualization.

The chapter on contextualization is largely composed of two lists of ideas reflecting on the requirements of being a Christian and on constructing theology for ministry in a secular society. Time is spent outlining the need for contextualization and the concepts of 'the western world' and 'secularism', but this only serves to provide a brief outline of the background against which McKim is working. Unlike the works of theologians such as Lesslie Newbigin and David Wells, McKim does not set out to discuss western culture in terms of its deeper 'plausibility structures' or from sociological data. Instead, he draws on his own pastoral experience to articulate the implications that our present social context has for Christianity.

His discussion on what the secular context means for being Christian (pp. 70-75) presents practical counsel for churches and individuals which may help to guide them towards more effective ministry. This counsel reminds readers that Christians cannot expect to receive societal support, and that the church's role in supporting its members' faith is increasingly important. Additionally, he highlights the vital importance of having an

informed and intelligent faith, and of being able to articulate it in a culture which has little or no prior knowledge of Christian ideas.

McKim's discussion on the significance of secularism for theology (pp. 76-84) provides useful, perhaps imperative thoughts for expressing and defending theological beliefs within a secular society. His suggestions centre on the need for churches to insightfully engage with their communities and present their beliefs in a way that makes sense to them. This must not only be done theoretically, but needs to be built into the way that Christians live and come together as churches, which McKim discusses in his chapters on ethics and ecclesiology.

The necessity to articulate theology for a secular audience is exemplified by McKim throughout the book as he discusses various issues. For example, McKim chooses to ground the value and dignity of every human being in the fact that they are created and loved by God, which he asserts carries a stronger authority and foundation than a vague appeal to 'human values,' as he puts it (pp. 128-129). I believe he could have asserted this more definitively against something more concrete, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A further example is found in his discussion on the doctrine of the Lordship of God. In this he emphasizes the importance of asserting the Lordship of God, since secular culture enshrines individual rights and freedoms. He says: 'If theology is to be contextual, it must not only recognise this problem, but *always* and *forcefully* present this belief with an apologetic concern – in other words, good reasons must *always* be given as to why a secular person must accept God's lordship' (p. 91, emphasis original). To illustrate this point, McKim employs the image of an astronaut who severs herself from her space shuttle in order to gain freedom (p. 92). Such freedom only results in separation from her only source of life. Elaborating on this, he explains that 'genuinely contextual' theology will highlight the impoverishment of freedom from God, and work on ways to articulate biblical ideas without bringing unwanted linguistic baggage (pp. 92-93).

Much of McKim's work draws on a limited number of influential theologians for his discussion partners. Since his aim is to present a

theology for practitioners within a secular culture this partly mitigates the brevity of treatment given to some subjects, since this allows him to simply present a doctrine and then move on to discuss its implications. Fortunately, his theological instincts are sensibly conservative in that he rejects doctrinal positions such as Process Theology, Open Theism, and Annihilationism. However, at times he leaves his work open to serious criticism since he does not defend certain statements as carefully as could be desired. His treatment of difficult theological positions can require more careful expression and defence.

An example of this is found in his connection between 'love' as an intrinsic characteristic of God on the one hand, and 'hell' on the other. In response to the objection to hell commonly drawn from the loving character of God, McKim suggests that hell is an expression of the love of God (pp. 129-30). His logic follows the philosopher and apologist Peter Kreeft, together with theologian Stanley Grenz. The argument is that the love of God will be experienced everywhere and by everyone, and those who refuse to enjoy the love of God will still experience it for all eternity, only for them it will be something incredibly unpleasant. For them, this eternal experience of the loving omnipresence of God will be known as 'hell'. This diverges from more traditional understandings of hell, and McKim fails to defend this against these. Strangely, when he comes to discuss hell in his eschatology chapter he defines it as being *separated* from God's presence, including his loving presence (pp. 470-71). Although the practical intention of his book means its length will be limited, this weakness should be ameliorated by allowing the space to argue for positions that fall outside mainline doctrinal understandings.

Overall this book is well worth reading by those who are interested in articulating Christian theology for churches in a secular society. As a systematic theology it is a little brief, but it maintains sensible traditional doctrinal positions while venturing to suggest how our new cultural context requires a fresh articulation of those positions. The real value of the book lays in its intentional engagement with secular values and objections. McKim offers an encouraging presentation of sound theology for a secular-based church. For

those who are more academically inclined, he also invites further serious thought and practice in contextualization, so that, as his title suggests, we may sing ‘the Lord’s song in a strange land’.

Chris Northcott

Moreland, J.P. *The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism*. London SCM Press, 2009. (ix + 210 pp). [ISBN: 978-0-334-04215-0]

J. P. Moreland’s latest book is a wonderful addition to the ever growing polemic against the dominant worldview in secular philosophy today – that of evolutionary naturalism. The title *Recalcitrant Imago Dei* gives away Moreland’s intentions from the start. Recalcitrant means stubborn, or unable to fit in. This book is Moreland’s reminder to the naturalists of their inability to accommodate specific aspects about the human person that are easily reconcilable, even required, within a biblically theistic framework.

The advance of the Christian position particularly deserves applause. With particular reference to the doctrine of *Imago Dei* Moreland unashamedly highlights biblical theism as the primary contender in this debate. This is sadly not the case for some books written by Christian philosophers with similar arguments and intentions.

Elements discussed in this book are human consciousness, free will, rationality, the substantial soul, objective morality, and intrinsic value. With a chapter dedicated to each Moreland consistently shows the inability naturalist have in accommodating these stubborn elements so obviously ingrained in every facet of human life, and consistently promotes biblical theism as the acceptable alternative.

What appealed most notably was Moreland’s argument for human consciousness as a defeater of the naturalist position (this was Moreland’s second chapter and the arguments here reveal his program well). In this chapter Moreland develops his argument

along similar lines to his previous works in this area (specifically his *Consciousness and the Existence of God*, and William Lane Craig & Moreland's *Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*) Moreland argues that evolutionary naturalism is 'a strictly physical story' (p. 17) and therefore the realities of mind and consciousness have no place (and no necessary existence) right from the start. If matter is all that existed in the beginning it follows that matter be all that exists now, regardless of the complex developments within the evolutionary process. In his words, 'Start with matter and tweak it physically and all you will get is tweaked matter.' (p. 17). For this reason, the existence of human consciousness proves highly problematic for the evolutionary naturalist (a fact that many naturalists do not deny, see p. 17-18).

In response it has been suggested that consciousness is in fact a *physical* reality, and that it corresponds perfectly with various physical states observable within the human brain. However, as Moreland points out, there are requirements of physical matter that are not present in consciousness. For example, consciousness occupies no physical space; and, consciousness is a subjective knowledge, where as physical states are purely objective (p. 20). Further, consciousness and physical matter are not necessarily dependent upon one another. If we imagine a world without the existence of consciousness, the existence of physical matter is not at all problematic. In a world without consciousness 'matter would still exist and be what scientists tell us it is. Carbon atoms would still be carbon atoms; electrons would still have negative charge. An electron is still an electron regardless of whether or not conscious minds exist in the world' (p. 20-21). Consciousness is not, therefore, built into physical matter. Thus, it would seem that the only way for consciousness and physical matter to work together is if they were created by God to do so.

After developing this argument Moreland turns to address prominent alternative explanations for human consciousness that do not result in theism. The authors he engages here are Frank Jackson, John Searle, and Conin McGinn (these are authors Moreland continues to engage throughout the book, particularly John Searle). Moreland successfully, in my opinion, defends

consciousness as a defeater of evolutionary naturalism and a fact in favor of biblical theism. Naturalists here are faced with the grim necessity of denying genuine human consciousness, or else are forced to adopt biblical theism as the alternative.

Moreland develops his argument in a similar manner throughout the following chapters, but his conclusion is always the same – evolutionary naturalism is unable to accommodate for these recalcitrant elements, while biblical theism praises them as integral to the human person created in as the *Imago Dei*.

The major criticism of the book, however, is in its style of writing. Being largely a consolidation of Moreland's previous work in this area, the book has a confidence that tends to say too much in too small a space. What should really be a 300 page work is here achieved in only 180 pages. Also, Moreland utilizes highly technical and philosophical language to make his points and offers very little in terms of background and introduction. This makes it a very difficult book to read. So unless the reader is already familiar with the arguments discussed, particularly Moreland's own emphases, they are likely to struggle. In Moreland's defense, however, this is clearly not an introductory volume, nor a clear presentation designed to attract and inform outsiders. It achieves what is intended with precision, but because of this it will likely fail to attract a wider audience.

With so many voices in criticism of the Christian position this book is timely and efficient in its task. For those philosophically minded this book will foster confidence for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Ian Goodman

Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 129. Eugene, OR.: Pickwick Publications, 2010. [ISBN: 978-1-60608-458-8]

Myk Habets' book, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, sets out to provide an orthodox and Biblical approach to the

current wave of theological interest in the Spirit, and in particular the Spirit's relationship to Christ. The book thus charts an interesting course through new territory whilst attempting to remain faithful to the old. The dominant way of thinking about Christ in church history has been as the incarnation of the pre-existent Word (Logos Christology). However the more dominant approach in scripture is that Jesus is the Christ because of his relationship to the Spirit (Spirit Christology). Resultantly, some recent Spirit Christologies have been set up in opposition to Logos Christology. Habets' work seeks to show how scripture and tradition are in fact in harmony, not conflict, and to demonstrate how holding both Logos and Spirit Christology together results in a more complete and highly relevant theology. Throughout the book he demonstrates a great respect for the tradition alongside a willingness to accept and honestly face the challenges and problems revealed by both current scholarship and the contemporary human situation.

The first chapter, 'Spirit Christology: Awaiting the Promise,' sets about phrasing the question. Habets states that this work will 'introduce the doctrine, examine the various mutually exclusive proposals, and offer a constructive Trinitarian proposal' (p. 7). He signals that he wants to avoid the traditional polarity between Logos and Spirit Christologies and present a Spirit Christology which is interwoven with, rather than separated from, the traditional Logos Christology encapsulated in the creeds (p. 9).

In the second chapter, 'Understanding Jesus: Approaches to Christology,' Habets embarks on an extensive discussion of how function (what Christ does) and ontology (who Christ is) relate within Christology. The discussion then moves into defining Christologies from 'above' and from 'below.' Habets is especially insistent that not all Christologies from 'below' are equal. Habets wishes to follow Gunton in asserting that while Christology may begin on the ground, it may not remain there and must move upwards (p. 42). He suggests Käsemann and Pannenberg have helped pave the way in their own treatment of Christology. He shares their refusal to presuppose a 'pre-formed Trinity' at the beginning of Christological enquiry and argues that instead the

confession of Jesus' divinity (and hence the Trinity) should arise out of Christology (p. 43). This chapter asserts a methodology 'that seeks to bridge the gulf between Jesus' humanity and divinity (the two nature Achilles heel of classical Christology) by means of the Holy Spirit' (p. 52).

The third chapter, 'Logos and Spirit: God's Two Hands,' surveys the Christology of many of the important theologians from the Apostolic Fathers through to Chalcedon. Habets observes that in the early church 'Spirit Christology was eclipsed by Logos Christology due to the fear of patripassianism [that God the Father suffered in Christ] . . . it enabled Christian faith to be harmonized with the fundamental principles of Greek philosophy' (p. 63). This tendency is then tracked through to Chalcedon where Habets concludes, 'perhaps the most serious problem with Chalcedonian Christology is that it has encouraged the wrong kind of Christology, exclusively from above. It has encouraged the church to start with the deity of the Son of God and then to fit (the problem of his) humanity into the divinity. At all costs the divinity must remain inviolate, while the humanity may be short changed' (pp. 87-88). This is not to suggest that Habets wishes to ignore or discredit Chalcedonian Christology, but rather, that he wishes to complement it with another perspective. Thus the next task is to return to the biblical witness to uncover the Spirit Christology which has lain hidden by such historical tendencies.

The fourth chapter, 'Interpreting the Evidence: Christology in New Testament Scholarship,' begins with a brief summary of approaches to New Testament Christology, especially regarding how the different Christology of the New Testament corpus are to be reconciled (or not) to each other. From the beginning Habets suggests that one of the reasons scholarship has struggled with this question, to the extent it has, is that it has presupposed a Christology from above and then tried to read that back into the New Testament accounts instead of seeing 'how and why the earliest communities of faith came to a belief in the deity of Jesus Christ in the first place' (p. 89). Habets claims that Spirit Christology can provide the 'integrative framework' that can be

used to hold together all the 'New Testament teaching on the identity of Jesus...' (p.102).

The rest of the chapter is then spent arguing for and outlining a 'retroactive hermeneutic' and the role of the Spirit in the interpretations of the present (p. 103). For Habets 'The canonical authors are consciously writing to and for Spirit-inspired readers' (p. 105). He argues that just as the Gospels are examples of a reinterpretation of the life of Jesus from the perspective of the believing community; so today we must also read them retroactively, conscious of Christ's presence with us now by the Spirit (p. 116). As arguing for this hermeneutic is really the function and bulk of the chapter, its title is somewhat misleading. Notwithstanding, the chapter makes a number of important and provoking assertions regarding the role of the Spirit in interpreting and appropriating scripture today, exposing essential issues for anyone who comes to the scriptures from a perspective of faith. The fifth chapter, 'Explaining Jesus: The Testimony of the New Testament Writers,' again suffers from something of a title confusion. At 70 pages it is the longest chapter in the book, yet 66 pages are devoted to the Gospels and Acts, 3 to Paul and the rest of the New Testament barely gets a look in, although Hebrews does receive some mention. Habets does provide a rationale for this but it was a rather limited discussion in its scope. After exposing the diversity of New Testament Christology in the previous chapter it was a shame not to have it play a fuller part in this one.

However, this chapter does take the reader on a tour of the Gospels from the point of view of the Spirit and provides some fascinating insights. For example, in discussing Jesus' temptations in the wilderness Habets concludes, 'The temptations were not levelled at his human weakness but rather aimed at his relationship to God' (p. 141); and Habets demonstrates the integral connection between Christ and the Spirit using a discussion of the unpardonable sin (p. 160). The great strength of this chapter is the amount of ground it covers and the depth of the references to secondary literature. Each section of the chapter would function well as a starting point for research into a particular facet of Jesus'

life and work. This gives the book its potential to function admirably as a text book for students looking for research topics. Due to the amount of ground covered Habets has to deal quickly with a number of contentious points which he does not have space to argue thoroughly. This leaves plenty of room for debate and exploration on some finer points, especially around the role of the Spirit in the death and resurrection of Christ. However the overall thesis of the chapter, that the New Testament conceives of Jesus Christ's identity in pneumatological terms, is not undermined.

The sixth chapter, 'And Then There Were Three; Spirit Christology and the Trinity,' surveys approaches to Spirit Christology and the Trinity, firstly those that argue for the replacement of Trinitarian theology with Spirit Christology and then those that argue for the complementarity of the two. Finally, Habets offers his own proposal built on the best of complementary approaches from both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. Appropriately and most interestingly this requires a discussion of the relation of the economic Trinity (i.e. the Trinity we see at work in the scriptures and Christian experience) and the immanent Trinity, for which Habets is keen to preserve its 'apophatic character' (p. 220). For Habets, following the Roman Catholic scholar Fr Thomas Weinandy, both Eastern and Western theological traditions have been weak in their appreciation of the Spirit's function within the Trinity (p. 223). To remedy this Habets argues that 'all three persons of the Trinity, within their relationships, help constitute each other . . . This is achieved through the mutual co-inherence or *perichoresis* of action within the Trinity that takes place whereby the persons are who they are because of the actions of all three' (p. 224). Habets concludes that the Spirit has as active a role within the Trinity as the Spirit does in making believers sons and daughters in Christ (p. 227).

Having proposed how Spirit Christology can complement and enhance traditional Trinitarian thinking Habets moves on in chapter seven, 'Justified by the Spirit?' Developing a Third Article Theology,' to outline the ways in which a methodology which starts with the Spirit as it does in a Spirit Christology complements and enhances other Christian doctrines. Habets calls this a 'Third

Article Theology.’ First he argues that the time is right for a Third Article Theology, in that the 21st century is ‘an age which rejects the universal for the particular.’ Hence a Third Article Theology’s starting point, the particular claim that in and through Jesus Christ we (the Christian community) are moved and transformed by the Holy Spirit, takes on special relevance, as opposed to starting with universal claims about the human plight (p. 232). The contribution of a Third Article Theology to epistemology, theology of scripture, anthropology, eschatology, ecclesiology, and soteriology, including union with Christ, *Theosis*, and a Pneumatology of the Cross, is then creatively sketched. Many insights are provided here that deserve more attention and teasing out.

The final chapter, ‘Receiving the Promise: Spirit Christology for Ministry and Mission,’ sets out to demonstrate the practical outworking of the theological ramifications of a Third Article Theology. Far from being an afterthought, this chapter is the climax and highlight of the whole book. Habets offers a number of provocative suggestions. For example, ‘certain readings of Chalcedon’ render Jesus ‘a philosophical aberration that one must comprehend in order to follow’ instead Spirit Christology renders Jesus a real human person who once we get to know and learn to follow we eventually come to understand as God incarnate (pp. 262-3). On the basis of this insight Habets shares helpful insights into the theological and pastoral problems of Jesus’ sinlessness and prayer life. While some have suggested that Jesus’ praying showed a lack of unity with God, Habets uses the paradigm of Third Article Theology to turn this argument on its head (p. 266). Habets also argues that the incarnation as interpreted within Logos Christology potentially makes Jesus remote and transcendent, unapproachable and remote, subverting the very purpose of the incarnation. Spirit Christology, on the other hand, provides a corrective that allows us to become participants in, rather than merely spectators of, God’s work of salvation (p. 272). One of the final moves of the book is to suggest that a Third Article Theology, if Habets’ model is adopted, has the potential to unite Eastern and Western Churches over the *filioque* controversy with its ability to affirm the validity of both approaches.

To summarise, Habets' *The Anointed Son* leads the reader through a thorough introduction to scholarship and approaches to Spirit Christology and a Third Article Theology, as well as advocating Habets' own model. The book's great strength is the amount of ground it covers and its extensive references, making it a useful work for reference and starting point for further research. Habets' constructive work, especially in the final three chapters is worthy of engagement and should make an important contribution to the field. The book also provides a number of exciting pointers with regards to the practical application of a Third Article Theology, especially in regard to Scripture reading and evangelism, and this is something that would be good to see expanded upon in a further work.

Jonathan Robinson

James F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context*, University of Illinois Press, 2009.

McGrath's book has an argument that for many would seem counterintuitive, that the early Christians did not diverge from Jewish monotheism, even despite their veneration of Jesus. For McGrath this is simply because the modern conceptions of monotheism are not how first century Jews would have defined their monotheism. The book's thesis is that while Christians, post Nicaea, are used to thinking about monotheism in terms of ontology, first century Jews defined their devotion to the one God in terms of worship. While Christians did worship Christ in some respects, McGrath argues that only sacrificial worship to Christ would have made Christ equal to God in a way that would constitute a breach of first century Jewish monotheism.

The book itself has the rare virtue of being blessedly short, a mere 104 pages of text (not including notes, bibliography and index). That being the case, what McGrath achieves within those pages is all the more impressive. The book is intended to be accessible to those without a detailed knowledge of the field. Thus the first chapter takes pains to explain clearly the important concepts and

relevant methods. This is done in a thorough but economical style. In the second chapter McGrath turns to the question of how Jews in the Greco-Roman era would have understood their own monotheism in the context of a world where the worship of many gods was commonplace. Given the book's intention to be accessible to the non-expert it is a shame that some of the more obscure source passages referenced, e.g. Hecataeus of Abdera, do not appear in translation, instead the reader is reliant on McGrath's précis of the relevant points. Having established a working definition of first century Jewish monotheism McGrath moves on to examine the writings of Paul (chapter 3), the Gospel of John (chapter 4), and Revelation (chapter 5), against this definition. In each chapter McGrath continues to develop his thesis and in each case finds the Christian elevation of Christ to be within the bounds of his definition of first century Jewish monotheism.

The sixth chapter moves on from the Biblical material to discuss the 'two powers heresy' within rabbinic literature. McGrath argues that after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple Jewish monotheism was forced to redefine itself. One result of this process was the rabbinic response to the two powers heresy which, while probably originally targeted at the Gnostics, came to encompass the Christians also. McGrath concludes that certain ideas that were condemned in the late second and early third centuries need not have been controversial in the first century. Thus the schism between Christianity and Judaism over their respective understandings of monotheism is re-dated from the first to the third century and, surprisingly, is a result of a change in the boundaries of Jewish monotheism rather than a developing Trinitarianism. The final chapter briefly summarises the book's findings and then offers some thoughts on their historical and theological implications.

McGrath's book is excellently written, the only hindrance to the reader's enjoyment being the use of endnotes instead of footnotes. It consistently progresses through his argument with nuance but without wasting space on peripheral issues. It engages with other scholarship in a respectful but efficient manner and represents a significant contribution to the field. McGrath's concluding

thoughts are balanced and show a concern for further discussion and for the appropriation of the work by theologians. I would suggest it is essential reading for anyone interested in NT background, Christology, or the historical development of Trinitarian theology.

Jonathan Robinson

Steven B. Sherman. *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 83. Oregon: Pickwick, 2008. (xi + 278 pp.)

In recent years epistemology has become one of the flash points between fundamentalists and evangelicals, and between those influenced more by the Enlightenment than postmodernity. Steven Sherman (Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics, Winebrenner Theological Seminary, USA) presents a study about ‘contemporary evangelical approaches to the knowledge of God, considering – and suggesting – ways Christian philosophers and theologians envision and make use of theological knowledge in the postmodern context’ (xv). Sherman’s work is especially focussed on postconservative evangelical theological epistemology, now prevalent in almost all the major evangelical seminaries. Taking Roger Olsen’s 1995 article in the *Christian Century* as the manifesto of postconservative evangelicalism, Sherman seeks to articulate what the epistemology of this movement is, how it is different – and better – than Enlightenment rationalism, and then present some commendable paradigms for consideration. Finally, Sherman provides his own constructive proposal and offers practical steps for revitalizing evangelical theological epistemology.

According to Sherman, Clark Pinnock is the ‘father of postconservative evangelical theology’ (8) and he is used as *the* paradigm to explain the shift from classical foundationalism to a reformist evangelical approach to theological knowledge (18-69). According to Sherman, Pinnock’s career has developed over three main phases: the early years (1960s – 74), in which his Calvinistic

theology resulted in an adoption of a classical foundationalism and a bibliocentrism; the middle years (1974-88) in which Arminianism was embraced and a soft rationalism was developed and a christocentrism; and the later years (1989 – the present) in which a neo-Wesleyan or open theistic theology is being developed along with an acceptance of a range of epistemological ideas from various Christian traditions, including some outside of evangelicalism and a focus on the Spirit and experience. Sharing Pinnock's assessment of his theological pilgrimage, Sherman presents Pinnock's theological development as a model for postconservative evangelicals everywhere.

After examining the emergence of postconservatism through the lens of Clark Pinnock, Sherman outlines the essence of postconservative theological epistemology. Sherman sets up a dichotomy between a traditionalist approach to epistemology (*sola scriptura*) with a revisionist approach (*prima scriptura*) which in turn justifies a reconsideration of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (scripture, tradition, reason, experience). According to Sherman, 'Even while evangelical intellectuals of different traditions continue to debate the question of *sola* as it pertains to theological knowledge, consensus persists as to the *primacy* and *priority* of the written word above all other sources of theology' (152). Postconservatives seek to incorporate socially-oriented methods into their epistemology and as a result, various sources of theology beyond scripture are appealed to. Sherman examines three representative examples: Stanley Grenz who incorporates culture into his epistemology; Kevin Vanhoozer who constructs a canonical-linguistic epistemology, and Robert Webber who advocates an ecclesial approach to theological epistemology which endeavours to take the *regula fidei* with all seriousness. In Sherman's estimation each of these moves represents the general direction postconservative theological epistemology is and should go.

In order to commend a paradigm for theological method and its epistemology Sherman recommends the methodology of Lesslie Newbigin, a model of postconservatism. In Sherman's analysis Newbigin's theological epistemology is christocentric rather than bibliocentric, ecclesial rather than individualistic, and personal

rather than rationalistic. While there are some points of difference between Newbigin and postconservatives, in the role of experience for instance, the similarities outnumber these differences. Newbigin's 'holistic' approach is thus recommended for postconservatives to follow. In light of Newbigin's epistemology Sherman seeks to 'chart a constructive way forward for evangelical scholarship to implement a revitalized, holistic theological epistemology, incorporating many of the characteristics of Newbigin's methodology, while making use of addition [sic] suggestions herein' (250-251). The following recommendations are offered: adopting a christocentric focus rather than a bibliocentric one (his *prima* versus *sola scriptura* principle); a Spirit oriented method (and with it an inclusivism); an instrumental use of Scripture read as a narrative by and within a faith community; the recovery of the role of tradition (what he calls *opinio*); recognising culture as a theological source; and finally, ecclesial participation in which loving praxis dominates. In the final sentence of the work we read that a revitalized evangelical epistemology 'will be a model of theological knowledge incorporating biblical perspectives and insights of various Christian traditions, along with critically-evaluated postmodern epistemology [sic] ideas: a holistic approach to the knowledge of God offered principally by evangelicals scholars emulating and building on the lead of Lesslie Newbigin – scholars of the *tradition-conserving reformist* and *conservative tradition-reforming* varieties' (270).

Several criticisms may be levelled against the work. A major drawback is the contention throughout that postconservatives are almost all Arminian, inclusivist, and not from a reformed background. Despite this claim some of the key figures of postconservatism which Sherman upholds include such *reformed* thinkers as Alister McGrath, Donald Bloesch, Stanley Grenz, Kevin Vanhoozer, and even Lesslie Newbigin! Concomitant with this claim is an incorrect perpetuation of what the reformers meant by *sola scriptura* and an obvious predilection for open theism. It is here that the main criticism of the work surfaces. Sherman overlooks one of the main epistemologies being developed today, that of critical realism. While McGrath is appealed to there is no mention of his three volume *Scientific Theology* in which he develops

one of the most rigorous studies on evangelical epistemology centred around critical realism. This is a significant weakness of the work considering the work not only of McGrath but N.T. Wright, Thomas Torrance, and a host of others who are developing this methodology and epistemology. Sherman appeals to Polanyi and his influence on Newbigin but didn't extend this discussion to investigate more rigorously how Polanyi has been utilised by numerous theologians to construct a postfoundationalist epistemology that differs in many respects from that offered by Sherman.

These biases may alienate Sherman's work from much of the North American context of evangelicalism he wishes address. Additionally, no index was supplied which is always an annoying omission, numerous spelling errors marred the work, and several key works published over the past few years were not interacted with, most notably Vanhoozer's 2005 monograph *The Drama of Doctrine*. Not surprisingly such a work will not find universal acceptance within evangelicalism. As Sherman states, 'How one views these shifts – as *revitalizing* evangelical theology or *raising* it – likely reveals one's inclination for postconservatism or traditionalism, respectively' (250). Or maybe it reveals agreement or disagreement with Sherman's reading of postconservatism.

This is a stimulating work which is generally well researched, written, and presented. Sherman presents in an easily digestible format the contours of much evangelical scholarship over recent years and presents an admirable argument as to why some form of postfoundationalist/ nonfoundationalist epistemology currently reigns supreme in philosophy and increasingly in theological epistemology, especially amongst younger evangelicals, or reformists as Sherman calls them. Sherman is especially adept in presenting the postconservative theological epistemology of the mainly Arminian postconservative evangelical scholars such as Pinnock. Sherman's 'revitalized' proposal for evangelical hermeneutics is well made and deserves a wide reading.

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