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FIGHTINGS WITHIN AND ALSO WITHOUT: NEW ZEALAND BAPTISTS, THE PUBLIC, AND GAY ISSUES 1970 TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

This article explores public aspects of the gay debate in relation to Baptists in New Zealand over the last forty-plus years. The article begins by looking at the impact of the gay debate internally in the Baptist denomination. While Baptist pronouncements have consistently viewed gay-expressive behaviour as sinful, there have still been internal debates characterised by pejorative polarisation. Consequently Baptists have sometimes avoided debate on gay issues out of a desire for unity. The article then considers public response to Baptists on gay-related issues. Often there has been no distinct public focus on Baptists *per se* but Baptists have been subsumed in the broader category of 'evangelical', 'conservative' or even 'fundamentalist' churches. This grouping of churches has commonly been portrayed in the public media as uncaring and out of step with society on gay-related issues. Thus any conservative Baptist pronouncements will now be seen in the public arena as 'homophobic'. The article concludes by arguing that Baptists ought to remain in the public debate but that the tone of their pronouncements needs always to be respectful and irenic.

Gay-related issues have been intermittently to the fore in both society and church in New Zealand for the last forty or more years. A flashpoint occurred at ecumenical church level in 1985. The National Council of Churches in New Zealand was debating whether to support a measure being debated in parliament to support decriminalisation of acts of male homosexuality. The Council decided to give its support by eleven votes to six (the Baptist Union being in the opposing group). At times the debate was acrimonious, with delegates 'yelling at each other' on the issue.¹ Were liberals simply humanists who had departed the faith, or were the conservatives extremist, homophobic bullies?²

Subsequent to decriminalisation in 1986, there has been a succession of further developments: the extension of human rights protections in relation to sexual orientation in 1993, controversy over annual Hero Parades in Auckland in the 1990s, legalising of Civil Unions for gays in 2004, and finally legislation gaining parliamentary approval in April 2013, sanctioning same-sex marriage.³

As far as the churches of New Zealand have been concerned, there has been quite a lot of internal yelling within denominations over the issue of gay ordination. This has led to a split in the Methodist Church,

¹ Letter Gerard Marks (General Superintendent, Baptist Union of New Zealand) to Dorreen Hatch (Secretary to NCC), 5 September 1985: National Council of Churches records: Alexander Turnbull Library Wellington, reference number 87-204, box 55.

² See Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002), 128.

³ The New Zealand initiative closely followed the announcement of United States president, Barack Obama, in May 2012 that he now supported same-sex marriage. Two private members bills were lodged in the New Zealand parliament within two or three weeks of that announcement. One bill has passed easily through most of the legislative processes and is likely to become law in April 2013.

with lots of evangelicals leaving, subsequent to Methodist approval of gay ordination in 1997.⁴ Significant numbers of evangelical Presbyterians came close to leaving their denomination during a struggle over gay ordination lasting more than a decade, until they finally won their battle, with their denomination banning the ordination of practising gays in 2004. The Anglican Church in New Zealand and worldwide is currently facing the possibility of schism in the context of strong moves towards formally approving the ordination of practising gay clergy. Homosexuality-related topics remain ‘hot’ and divisive in New Zealand’s churches today.

How have Baptists handled gay issues internally? Have they yelled at or demonised one another? The Baptist Union of New Zealand has throughout the period held a consistent position expressed at its annual assembly or through its assembly council, declaring the sinfulness of homosexual acts and the inappropriateness of gay ordination.⁵ Most recently the Baptist Assembly Council has articulated a position against Baptist pastors conducting gay marriages and against Baptist church buildings being used for such a purpose.⁶ Despite these sorts of stances there have been occasional internal flare-ups of tension amongst New Zealand Baptists.

In 1977, Rev Dr Bruce Turley, in promoting an annual appeal in *NZ Baptist* as Director of Christian Education, urged Baptists to live in light and love, noting a comment made by a Baptist homosexual member: “My church has such a hot campaign against the evils of homosexuality that I feel I don’t belong here.”⁷ An angry letter followed, claiming Turley was only “tampering with the sloppy mentality of this permissive age, about God’s love. He also is a God of wrath who will not spare the guilty or vile person.” Such types under God’s moral law “should be put to death.”⁸

Tension was most marked during a nation-wide debate over the decriminalisation of male homosexual acts in 1985-1986. The Baptist Public Questions Committee (PQC), while opposing human rights protections for homosexuals out of concern for potential normalisation of homosexuality, nevertheless came out in support of decriminalisation, though at a minimum age of twenty, not sixteen as the bill before parliament suggested. PQC support for decriminalisation produced a firestorm of acrimonious protest and debate within the denomination. This ranged from Baptists at one end calling homosexuality an “abomination”, to minority voices urging justice for homosexuals.⁹ This led to what was described as the “hottest debate of the year” at the annual Baptist assembly in 1985. A compromise was reached whereby the PQC stance was supported, but only with an initial rider that declared homosexual acts to be sinful.¹⁰ After decriminalising legislation had passed into New Zealand law, the much maligned PQC

⁴ Terry Wall, “Managing Conflict in Methodism: Why Did They Leave? Listening to Their Voices” (DMin Research Project; Australia: Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005); Doug Pratt, “An Ecclesial Dilemma: Homosexual Affirmation and Church Process,” *Colloquium* 39 no. 1 (2007): 36–57; Douglas Pratt, “Homosexuality and Theological Process: A Doctrinal Critique,” *Colloquium* 40 no. 1 (2008): 75–95.

⁵ See, for example, *New Zealand Baptist (NZB)* (December 1968): 10; Assembly Council statement, “The Values We Affirm Regarding Marriage and Sexuality,” (June 1999) (reaffirmed March 2005); *NZB* (November 2006): 18.

⁶ *NZB* (May 2013): 20.

⁷ *NZB* (September 1977): 9.

⁸ *NZB* (October 1977): 3.

⁹ *NZB* (July 1985): 2; (November 1985): 2.

¹⁰ *NZB* (December 1985): 10.

issued a statement lamenting the inability of Baptists to hold in tension both moral standards and a concern for homosexual Christians.¹¹

In September 1987 there was a brief report in the *NZ Baptist* on a gathering of nineteen homosexual Christians.¹² This led to a flurry of heated letters, published under the heading, “A plea for gracious and patient dialogue”.¹³ Obviously the tone of the letters was not doing this.

Further controversy flared in 1992 when a radical Baptist congregation came out in support of gay clergy and gay marriages, discounting biblical texts on the basis of situational and cultural factors and the “limitations of the Scriptures”. Its position was that if there was no justice in this matter (i.e. full acceptance of homosexuals), there would be no genuine worship, mission or church.¹⁴ After two months of polemical correspondence in the pages of the *NZ Baptist*, its editor shut the debate down—essentially the matter was too hot to be argued.¹⁵

While debate has periodically erupted in the last thirty years on gay issues, the overall inclination of New Zealand Baptists has been to avoid debate beyond affirming the wrongs of homosexual behaviour. This avoidance was highlighted for me in relation to a paper on sexuality (including homosexuality) produced by a small committee that I chaired in 2010-2011. The committee was asked to undertake the task by the Assembly Council of the Baptist Union.¹⁶ It produced a report which could fairly be described as ‘open’ but ‘conservative’. The paper that emerged is available through the Baptist Union but has not been publicised in any way. When I asked the new Baptist national leader whether the paper would be publicised, he indicated his hesitation to do so—he didn’t want controversy early in his watch.

My paper to this point suggests that on a controversial issue like homosexuality three significant responses have emerged among New Zealand Baptists. One has been to ‘yell’ at each other, using pejorative language such as ‘false gospel’, ‘humanistic viewpoints’, ‘lack of compassion’, ‘minority bashing’, ‘homophobia’, and ‘bigotry’.¹⁷ The editor of the *NZ Baptist* summed up the correspondence he was receiving at the height of the 1985 debate: “[Y]ou would expect established Christians to be the nicest people there are. Sadly this isn’t always the case. . . . I have to admit that some of the contributions appal me. . . . As well as attacking the sin or the issue, they manage to stick every pin possible into their opponents.”¹⁸

The second response to homosexuality has been to sidestep the issue in the public arena. It is too controversial; so let’s shut any statement or debate down for the sake of harmony, unity and public image. It may be sad that it is a major public issue crying out for attention and moral leadership, but we can’t handle it—it would simply provoke yelling amongst ourselves. This perspective was a factor in the demise of the Baptist Union’s public questions committee in the early 1990s. When queried in 1996 about this, the Baptist Union Executive Secretary responded: “While there are issues on which churches do need assistance from

¹¹ *NZB*, (June 1986): 14.

¹² *NZB* (September 1987): 2.

¹³ *NZB* (November 1987): 2. See also *NZB* (October 1987): 2.

¹⁴ *NZB* (June 1992): 8.

¹⁵ *NZB* (August 1992): 2.

¹⁶ Email, Rodney Macann to Laurie Guy dated 19 July 2010 and a response in return, 9 December 2010.

¹⁷ *NZB* (September 1991): 4; (October 1985): 2; (June 2000): 4; (February 2000): 4; (August 1996): 4.

¹⁸ *NZB* (October 1985): 2.

time to time, it seems that the Public Questions Committee method per se doesn't meet those needs."¹⁹ In reality, taking that line then often meant doing nothing and saying nothing.

A third response to the issue of homosexuality has been to argue the issue from a scriptural base, but to do this with graciousness and respect, utilising the theology that underlies the verses, coupled with interaction with contemporary society and wise reflection. But those voices have too seldom been the dominant voices of the debate. To avoid fighting within the Baptist denomination we have often simply sat on our hands.

What then of fighting without? How have New Zealand Baptists related with society on the issue of homosexuality? From early times Baptists in New Zealand have comprised a little less than two per cent of the total population. This relatively low percentage has meant that a distinctive Baptist position has often not been noted by the media. Baptists have rather been located in the public eye within a broader stream of 'conservative', or 'evangelical', or even 'fundamentalist' churches.

A century ago evangelicalism, represented primarily by Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Brethren churches, and the Salvation Army, was often seen as narrow-minded, obsessed with shutting down the 'trinity of evil', namely alcohol, gambling and immoral sex, and turning Sunday into a gloomy Sabbath. This perception, which was overdrawn but also significantly true, gave rise in New Zealand (and Australia) to the term 'wowsers', conveying the notion of a 'puritanical fanatic'.²⁰

As a significant strand in this broader evangelical approach, Baptists were wowsers in popular public perception, especially in relation to alcohol. Hence a gutter-press article attacked the pronouncements of the annual Baptist Conference in 1912, accusing Baptists of being a "wowsers" and "kill-joy" group, "stirring up hatred and all uncharitableness", and having "an unbalanced mind obsessed with . . . the drink question".²¹ This wowser image persisted for most of the twentieth century, with some teetotal Baptists up into the 1980s even embracing the label with pride and challenge to society.²² Overall, however, a Baptist wowser image tended to have negative overtones. As *NZ Baptist* editor, Barry Hibbert wrote in 1976, "we have tended in our puritanical tradition to be at least a little suspicious of sheer enjoyment".²³

An absolutist Baptist stance in relation to the prohibition of alcohol gradually disappeared in the 1980s. The point at which Baptists were now most at variance from society related to sexuality issues generally, and to homosexuality in particular. The public image of kill-joy, puritanical, 'no-fun', conservative churches has persisted, particularly in relation to sexuality issues, even though 'wowsers' language has largely dropped out of usage.

Whereas public attitudes in the 1950s supported a Baptist sex ethic which validated sexual activity only within the framework of marriage, this was not the case from the 1970s onward. In the language of

¹⁹ Executive Secretary's report to Assembly Council, 15-17 March 1996.

²⁰ Della Thompson, ed., *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 1617.

²¹ *NZ Truth* (2 November 2012): 5. For a similar attack on Baptists as kill-joy wowsers, see *NZ Truth* (16 December 1911): 4; (8 February 1913): 4.

²² *NZB* (December 1981): 2; (February 1985): 2.

²³ *NZB* (November 1976): 2. See also a self-reference to a columnist's "Puritan upbringing" in *NZB* (May 1985): 7.

psychology professor James Ritchie, “We got with sex in the sixties”.²⁴ The ideological shift, a revolution “in the head rather than the bed”, meant sex was perceived primarily as pleasure, largely disconnected from procreation.²⁵ If sex was essentially pleasure, why not homosexual sex also, so long as no one else was harmed? There has been a shift of seismic proportions in public attitudes. This was noted in a recent major newspaper article by columnist Paul Thomas headed, “Now it’s the sex police who are the odd ones: times have changed, and the guardians of our morals need to realise it.” In criticising a Pentecostal church for refusing to host a concert involving lesbian singer, Anika Moa, Thomas observed that sex had become commonplace, particularly through the seeping of pornography into popular culture which had become progressively sexualised. So a conservative voice on sexuality issues was an antiquated relic: “Hard as it may be to believe, some people still get het up about sex”.²⁶ Should Baptist give up the public fight? Should they have done this long ago?

Baptists were a major strand in the opposition to homosexual law reform in 1985. A mammoth 800,000 petition (around 25% of the population) expressing opposition to decriminalisation was presented to parliament in September 1985. Two prominent New Zealanders were the public face of the petition. One was a Baptist—Sir Peter Tait, ex-mayor of Napier and ex-Member of Parliament. In parliament itself, prominent Baptist Graeme Lee was one of the two main parliamentarians leading the sixteen-month unsuccessful struggle against decriminalisation.

From a public relations point of view the opposition to decriminalisation came across as uncaring. A cartoon from that time ably captured this perception. A group of the anti-decriminalisation leaders including Sir Peter Tait are portrayed as discussing how they could have “insisted that these vile degenerates be boiled alive in chicken-fat” etc. But they didn’t, “because we love them” (though, in the satirical cartoon, it is patent that they did not).²⁷

The decriminalisation forces (including Baptists) lost the debate. The process reinforced a negative image of evangelicals as “against things”—against fun, against pleasure.²⁸ Subsequent to decriminalisation public opinion began more and more to move towards full gay rights, including gay marriage. It became increasingly difficult to speak out any message in the public arena on gay rights other than tolerance and support, without being howled down. As one correspondent indicated to the *NZ Baptist*, “Whenever someone is brave enough to publicly disagree with homosexuality we are invariably treated to an exhibition of name calling. The usual ones are bigoted, intolerant, homophobic and fundamentalist.”²⁹

One can see the impact of public negativity towards non-gay-affirming churches on the Salvation Army. This church was at the forefront of opposition to decriminalisation of acts of male homosexuality in

²⁴ J.E. Ritchie, “Morals and Social Habits: N.Z. in the Sixties,” *NZ Listener* (16 January 1970): 6.

²⁵ Danielle C. Moreau, “Living with the Pill: Oral Contraceptive Use in New Zealand 1960-1975” (MA thesis, Auckland: University of Auckland, 1997): 120-21; also Linda Grant, *Sexing the Millennium* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 18; 60.

²⁶ *NZ Herald* (9 March 2013): A23.

²⁷ Tom Scott, Cartoon, *Evening Post* (5 October 1985).

²⁸ Editorial, *NZB* (May 1988): 2.

²⁹ Letter of Andrew Davies, *NZB* (October 1996): 6. Examples of such name calling can be seen in Nicola Legat, “Needing Another Hero?” *Metro* (February 2001): 46–57 at 48, 50, 51, 52.

1985-1986. This provoked a major, gay-orchestrated, public backlash, with people urging a boycott of the Salvation Army's 'Red Shield' annual public appeal for funds, and with many (typically nominal) Salvationists disavowing their ties with the Salvation Army at the following census in declaring their religious affiliation. Such an experience led the New Zealand Salvation Army headquarters in the gay marriage debate of 2012–2013 to send a memo to its officers instructing them to keep out of the public debate altogether. Such sidestepping of gay issues on grounds of expediency makes practical (though not necessarily gospel) sense.

At a personal level I experienced negativity towards Baptists when I enrolled at the University of Auckland in 1997 for a PhD thesis on the gay debate in New Zealand, 1960–1986. Two or three of the history faculty unsuccessfully sought to block my enrolment on the basis that I was Baptist and therefore prejudiced. Subsequently they verbally attacked me publicly at a PhD presentation day when each candidate had to outline their work to date. My supervisor advised me to complain about my treatment to the head of department. When I did so, the head indicated that the leading challenger thought I was homophobic. When I assured him that I was not, he then treated that as the end of the discussion. This experience suggests a widespread perception: Baptist = homophobic.

I survived that initial grilling and was able to get co-operation from almost all key participants in the 1985–1986 decriminalisation debate, from fundamentalists to gay liberationists. The one exception was Don McMorland, law lecturer and co-drafter of the 1985 decriminalisation bill. He declined to be interviewed on the basis that “Baptists were not helpful to us when the decriminalisation bill was being passed”.

Eventually my completed thesis appeared as a published book.³⁰ It was reviewed in the *NZ Journal of History* by a gay-sympathetic academic with these words: “The tone is measured and even-handed. As a lecturer in the New Zealand Baptist Theological College, in a denomination whose members are most vehemently opposed to relaxing the law on male homosexuality, Guy understands the mind-set and rhetoric of religious conservatives and fundamentalists but he maintains a critical stance. Not many historians of this subject have managed to present the views of both sides with such balance.”³¹

Decriminalisation fostered a public mood-shift on gay issues which became very evident in the 1990s. In 1994 gays in Auckland began holding annual Hero Parades, celebrating gay identity. At City Council level there was clearly reluctance to provide full endorsement and support for the parade. Deputy Mayor and Baptist, David Hay, was the key councillor in opposition to the parade.³² The council organised a hearing for two pro-parade and two anti-parade leaders. The meeting was attended by 1200 people and turned into a chaotic shouting match at times. Bruce Patrick, pastor of the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle, was one of the two anti-parade speakers. Though he was careful to keep the focus on the public nudity and simulated sex that was involved in the February parade, and though he expressed concern for the suffering of the gay community, there was clear hostility to his stance as simply a cover for an anti-gay attack on the gay community.³³ As the meeting was about to start, Patrick was interviewed on the popular *Holmes* program on

³⁰ Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002).

³¹ *NZ Journal of History* 37 no. 2 (2003): 221.

³² Legat, “Needing,” 46, 51.

³³ *NZ Herald* (13 April 1994): 3; (15 April 1994): 3; Nicola Legat, “Hay Fever,” *Metro* (June 1994): 86–96 at 91.

New Zealand's main television channel. In the interview Patrick made the point that his concern was not anti-gay but simply concern with the nudity and lewdness of the parade. Part way through the interview the television company lost the interview connection and the interview was terminated. The company later suggested that a cleaner at the town hall had inadvertently turned off a switch—but the last one had left work several hours earlier. Patrick's view is that a gay-sympathising, television technician had deliberately lost the connection.³⁴ Whatever the facts, the cutting off of Patrick conveyed powerful symbolism: we don't want to hear your sort of views in public any more.

Five years later Bruce Patrick joined with others in lodging a full-page advertisement, featuring public figures such as Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. The advertisement asserted, "it takes more than a parade to make a hero".³⁵ It was clearly aimed against the Hero Parades and the normalisation of homosexual relationships. This provoked a great deal of controversy, including a gathering of fifty protestors outside the Baptist Tabernacle.³⁶ The advertisement was seen as "bigotry" and "homophobia".³⁷ New Zealand's Chief Human Rights Commissioner viewed the advertisement as "unfortunate", and described any "attempts to stir up ill-feeling" against gays and lesbians as "destructive".³⁸

Since then New Zealand Baptists have continued to face criticism for opposing normalisation of gay relationships. Opposition to the Civil Union bill in 2004 from groups such as the Baptists and the Catholic bishops was seen by one newspaper columnist as intolerant and "inclining people to stop listening to them at all".³⁹

Fuelling negative perceptions of Baptists on this issue are other groups using the Baptist name. In the 1960s there was virtually only one Baptist denomination in New Zealand. Now there are at least twenty-three, a number of them fundamentalist imports from the United States.⁴⁰ Overseas Baptist voices on occasion tarnish the image of New Zealand Baptists. This particularly applies to the tiny United States Westboro Baptist Church with its godhatesfags.com website, which periodically receives publicity in New Zealand as a "gay hatred" body.⁴¹ This tiny body has left its toxic footprint here. A recent 2013 cartoon on New Zealand's gay marriage debate has a conservative person holding a "no to gay marriage" placard and wearing a shirt emblazoned, "God hates fags".⁴²

A few weeks after I presented the conference paper in July 2012 on which this article is based, I was asked to go on a short current affairs discussion on gay marriage on the *Close Up* program of New Zealand's leading television station. I was introduced as a "Baptist theologian". The program led to over 2300 television website responses, a majority of which were negative. Although I used no overtly religious

³⁴ Interview with Bruce Patrick, 1 February 2013.

³⁵ *NZ Herald* (10 February 1999).

³⁶ C. Daniells, "Anti-Hero Parade Ad Stirs Protest," *NZ Herald* (12 February 1999).

³⁷ *NZ Herald* (12 February 1999): A13; Chris Ryan & C. Michael Hall, *Sex Tourism, Marginal People and Liminalities* (London: Routledge, 2001), 109.

³⁸ Ryan & Hall, *Sex Tourism*, 109.

³⁹ Ian Harris, "Back Up Bishops—Civil Unions No Threat," *Otago Daily Times* (14 December 2004): 17. See also Geoffrey Vine, "Civil Unions See Churches Abandon Leadership Role," *Otago Daily Times* (22 February 2005): 17.

⁴⁰ Kevin Ward in Stephen Kilgallon, "Selling God," *Sunday Star Times* (3 July 2011): supplement, C4-5.

⁴¹ David McLoughlin, "Are Liberals Fascists?" *Dominion Post* (28 August 2004): E1-2.

⁴² *NZ Herald* (16 March 2013): A22.

language or argument, a lot of the negative responses were against Christianity, religion or the church. This negativity was summed up in one statement: “One victory for humanity, take that religious fanatics!”⁴³

The following day I received an email from one of my students: “Thanks for the way you spoke on Close Up last night Laurie. I really appreciated having a Christian viewpoint portrayed by logic, not emotion. My best friend is gay, and it’s refreshing not to feel like crawling under the table as a Christian, when this issue comes up.”⁴⁴

We Baptists should not be concealed under the table. We need to be out in the public arena. But for this to be effective, a warm public image is required. And this will not be produced either by anger or by naïve rhetoric.

When the New Zealand gay marriage bill went to a select committee hearing in November 2012 to February 2013, only a small proportion of the several thousand people who put in submissions were heard in person. One of them was Masterton Baptist minister, Scott Lelievre. He went on the attack, calling gay marriage an “abomination” and a sin under God.⁴⁵ Fighting words; but is that the way to win friends and influence people? Is that the way to reach the majority who sit in the middle on these sorts of debates and can be swayed either way? This sort of response may strengthen the faithful in the church, while alienating the church from the society it is seeking to reach with the gospel.

Too often New Zealand Baptists have engendered negative perceptions in wider society on gay-related issues. Some of this is unavoidable. But we have brought a lot on ourselves. In speaking in public spaces on public issues we ought to heed the words of 1 Peter 3:15-16a: “Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence”.

⁴³ “Gay Marriage Likely to Pass the First Hurdle”: <http://tvnz.co.nz/politics-news/gay-marriage-likely-pass-first-hurdle-4988497?page=2&pagesize=5>, accessed 7 March 2013. For similar response to a newspaper article I published in the *New Zealand Herald* on 29 August 2012, see http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10830082, accessed 7 March 2013.

⁴⁴ Email, Bronwyn Duffy to Laurie Guy, 7 June 2012 (used with permission).

⁴⁵ Gay marriage “abomination”, committee told: <http://www.3news.co.nz/Gay-marriage-abomination-committee-told/tabid/1607/articleID/277713/Default.aspx>, accessed 7 March 2013.

THE ATONEMENT AND HEALING: WRESTLING WITH A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

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ABSTRACT

Some Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements have attempted to explicitly link physical healing with the atonement by appealing to Isaiah 53:4–6, Matthew 8:14–17, and 1 Peter 2:21–25. This theology has been felt in Evangelical circles also, especially in the majority world and among churches with charismatic leanings. This article simply asks, can a theology of healing be developed from these passages, and, if so, what do we mean by *healing*?

This article argues that while these passages may include physical healing, they do not guarantee it. These verses cannot be used to justify physical healing on demand. While the atonement includes the possibility of physical healing, especially in the Parousia, this healing cannot be demanded. It is only in the age to come that we are completely healed and receive our promised resurrection bodies. The article considers the relationship between a theology of healing and its relationship to our theology of the atonement. Our theology of the atonement can expand our understanding of the nature and scope of healing and its connections with the atonement and the incarnation.

I came to a personal faith in Jesus Christ in my late teens. Having grown up in a Reformed, Free Church, congregational tradition, I made a decision to follow Jesus in an Australian Pentecostal church. I quickly embraced both the biblical foundations of my childhood and the spiritual enthusiasm of Pentecostalism. Then, in my early twenties, I experienced a spiritual crisis. The Pentecostal church I attended taught that physical healing is guaranteed in the atonement, and that one only needs enough faith to be healed. I was told that the following formula guarantees physical healing: (1) The personal faith of the sick person, plus; (2) the faith of the believing congregation, plus; (3) the spiritual gift of the charismatic leader, plus; (4) the atoning work of Jesus Christ, plus; (5) the biblical guarantee of present physical healing. Even as a young person, I struggled to reconcile this with Scripture, modern medicine, and human experience. Then, in the early 1990s, two Pentecostal Christian leaders I knew died from cancer in the same year—and both of them were absolutely certain that God would heal them from their cancer in this life. As I watched their congregations try to make sense of their deaths (which was at complete odds with their theology), I decided that I would allow Scripture to speak for itself on this matter of the relationship between the atonement and physical healing.

Some Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements have attempted to explicitly link physical healing with the atonement by appealing to Isaiah 53:4–6, Matthew 8:16–17, and 1 Peter 2:24. This theology has been felt in Evangelical, Free Church, and mainline Protestant circles also, especially in the majority world and among churches with charismatic leanings. There have been rigorous debates around the associated theological, biblical, and pastoral issues. On one end of the spectrum are those who believe that physical healing is guaranteed in the atonement (e.g. A.B. Simpson, Kenneth Hagin, and Kenneth and Gloria Copeland). At the other end, are those who reject any such notion, and focus almost exclusively on

the way that the atonement deals with sin (e.g. B.B. Warfield, Merrill F. Unger, John MacArthur, and Richard Mayhue).

There is, of course, a long tradition of linking healing with the atonement—with variations on what is meant by *healing* and *atonement*. Roman Catholic theologians often have healing at the center of their view of atonement. The Patristic era produced atonement theories that were healing based (though to call them theories may be overstating the case), and this is also true of Eastern Orthodox theology—*theosis* being the key lens for such treatments. *Theosis* is the theology of spiritual and holistic healing and transformation, found in union with God and the attainment of his likeness—through purification of body and mind (*katharsis*), spiritual contemplation and illumination (*theoria*), and the union with and likeness of God found in sainthood (*theosis*). Among others, such understandings of the spiritual healing found in the atonement may be associated with Athanasius, Clement, Irenaeus, and Origen.

All this leads me simply to ask, “Can a theology of healing be developed from these three biblical passages, and, if so, what do we mean by *healing*?”

Millard Erickson introduces the arguments used for healing in the atonement. Those who make the case for physical healing in the atonement suggest that since sickness is a result of the Fall it is dealt with in the same way as the rest of the Fall’s results—through the atoning death and resurrection of Christ. They argue that in Matthew 8:16–17 the Gospel writer is linking Jesus’s healings with his work of sin-bearing (as in Isaiah 53:4–6). Some even see sickness (or some of it) as a direct result of sin—this view was common in ancient times, and in Jesus’s time. Therefore, the remedy is the same for both sin and sickness—the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While Erickson recognizes that, in general, sickness has its origins in the Fall, Jesus did not make a direct link between illness and an individual’s sin (see John 9:1–3), and his healings were not often connected with forgiveness of sin. The intimate connections made by some between illness and individual sin, and between healing and forgives of sins, is not justified by the biblical data.¹

So what do we make of the relationship between the atonement and physical healing when we examine Isaiah 53:4–6, Matthew 8:14–17, and 1 Peter 2:21–25?

ISAIAH 53:4–6

⁴Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.²

John Oswalt rightly argues that the principal theme of Isaiah is servanthood: “The servanthood of God’s people through whom his saviorhood is revealed to the world. This theme is made explicit at the outset in 2:1–5.”³ Chapters 1–39 lay the theological foundations for such servanthood, and chapters 40–66 explore

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 836–39.

² All references are in the TNIV.

³ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 7.

the implications of the *vocation of servanthood*. Chapters 49–55 consider the changes that are necessary within God’s people, “changes in relationship and in character if hope is to endure (48:18–19),” if “sinful Israel” is to become “servant Israel.”⁴

This brings us to substitution and atonement. John Oswalt writes that according to Isaiah 49:1–55:13, the *means of servanthood* is atonement. Sinful, broken, deaf, blind, and rebellious Israel cannot be made right with the Lord God (in relationship and character). God will send his substitutionary, delivering Servant to be punished for others, to suffer, heal, deliver, and atone. The Servant is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Servant will “give himself to be for and in Israel what Israel could never be in itself.”⁵ “The language of carrying and bearing sets the stage for the substitutionary understanding of the Servant’s suffering... The Servant is not suffering *with* his people (however unjustly), but *for* them.”⁶ The Servant secures for Israel what she cannot secure for herself. He is unjustly punished for the sake of her healing and deliverance, and so that she may enter the loving embrace of the Lord God, justice having been satisfied.

John Goldingay puts the references here to Israel’s wounding and healing in the context of the entire book of Isaiah, and of the entire Old Testament witness. In this light, the primary meaning is metaphorical. While the meaning is primarily metaphorical, it is not entirely metaphorical. They are suffering physically as a consequence of the Assyrians, whom God is using as the rod of his anger (cf. Isa. 10:5).

The chastisement takes the form of “wounding”, another link with 1:2–6, which emphasized that the people had received no treatment for their wounds. “Healing” then nuances well-being and constitutes another link with ch. 6, where v. 10 warned that they would never find healing (Lam. 2:13 also asks who could heal Jerusalem). Healing is also another exodus word (Exod. 15:26; see further Deut. 28:27, 35)... The servant is the means of that healing coming. The talk of wounding and healing in these passages puts us on the track of the significance of this image here: it suggests the restoration of a broken nation.⁷

Notice the first-person plural pronouns in this passage. We are rebellious and willful. He was crushed and he atoned for “our transgressions” and “our iniquities.” Because of his wounds we are healed, forgiven, justified, delivered, purified, and in right relationship with God. We are called to accept his substitutionary sacrifice, and to come to him in repentance and obedience. While physical sickness and healing is dealt with metaphorically in Isaiah 53:4–6 (illness and healing as metaphorical reference to sin-bearing and spiritual deliverance), there seems to be more than a metaphorical reference to sin-bearing here, but also a reference to actual sickness. So physical illness and healing seem to be here, even though this is not the primary intent or meaning of the passage (even though physical illness and healing is not the central concern of this passage, it seems to refer to healing from actual physical healing). The primary reference is to the healing of the wounded nation. However, are we to understand this as physical healing on demand in the present life?⁸ The passage does not bear that interpretation out.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

⁵ *Ibid.* 287.

⁶ *Ibid.* 386.

⁷ John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005). 503.

⁸ John Oswalt, *Isaiah: The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text- to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003). 585; John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001). 304–5.

MATTHEW 8:14–17

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. ¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Christology is the central theme of the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), the promised Savior and Redeemer, the Son of God, and the Son of Man. Jesus is the anticipated King of the kingdom of God, the Judge, Lord, and Mediator of the divine presence.⁹ In the light of that christological purpose, Matthew recounts ten examples of Jesus' miracles in 8:1–9:38. "Matthew 8:1–17 shows Jesus' authority over sickness; 8:23–28 shows his authority over nature, demons, and paralysis; and 9:18–34 demonstrates his authority over disabilities and death."¹⁰ Jesus, the Savior, King, and Lord has authority over all creation and humanity, and we are called to recognize, obey, and declare that divine authority. Jesus' divine authority calls us to fully committed and obedient discipleship.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14–17 is another story that serves as an apology for Jesus's messianic claim (and illustration that he is the King over the kingdom of God). However, there are also implications here for Matthew's audience and for us. Craig Keener writes, "Matthew spends much of his narrative presenting Jesus as a healer because he expects his audience to experience Jesus as a continuing healer, as one who now holds all authority in heaven and on earth (28:18; cf. 9:35–38; 10:1; Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 12:9; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; Jas 5:14–15)."¹¹

Atonement and physical healing may not be the primary reason Matthew recounts this story, or the other stories in Matthew 8. Matthew is keen to show that the messianic King is deeply concerned for the outcast, broken, marginalized, and "unclean." Matthew 8 follows this theme closely—Jesus touches, heals, dignifies, and cares for the leper (8:1–4) (*a physical outcast*), the non-Jewish Centurion (8:14–15) (*an ethnic outcast*), and a woman (8:14–15) (*a gender outcast*). Craig Blomberg makes this point central to interpreting the purpose of Matthew 8. "It may be, after presenting three cases of Jesus' potentially defiling himself ritually, that [Matthew] simply wishes to underline how Jesus was willing to become unclean in order to make others clean. The physical removal of the virus or bacteria would thus prove less significant than the spiritual removal of man-made distinction that ostracize certain kinds of people from the love of God and fellow humans."¹² Hence, "He took our infirmities and carried our diseases." We have to be careful, as we wrestle with the theme of physical healing in this passage, that we do not miss the author's real intent—to demonstrate Jesus Christ is the King who has all authority over creation and humanity, and who, furthermore, is concerned for the cleansing, dignity, and healing of the outcast (thus revealing the true nature of his Person and kingdom).

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 61–71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹² Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (The New American Commentary, vol. 22; Nashville, TN.: Broadman, 1992), 145.

Matthew 8:17 can be interpreted in a number of ways: (1) Jesus vicariously carried human sickness when he died on the cross (e.g. A.B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and some Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals).¹³ (2) Isaiah 53:4 refers metaphorically to sin-bearing, and Matthew applies the verse literally to Jesus's healing activity in Matthew 8 (e.g. Rowland V. Bingham, *The Bible and the Body*).¹⁴ (3) Both Isaiah 53:4 and Matthew 8:17 refer to "actual physical sickness and mental distresses rather than sins," and to an empathy with it, not a carrying of it (e.g. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*).¹⁵ (4) Both Isaiah 53:4 and Matthew 8:17 (ultimately) refer metaphorically to sin-bearing (e.g. Don Carson, *Matthew: "Jesus' healing ministry is itself a function of his substitutionary death, by which he lays the foundation for destroying sickness... Jesus's healing miracles point beyond themselves to the cross"*).¹⁶

Some combination of the second, third, and fourth views seems best:

(1) Isaiah 53:4 is readily understood in metaphorical terms, as the next two verses clearly deal with sin, not sickness.

(2) There seems to be more than a metaphorical reference to sin-bearing here, but also a reference to actual sickness, and to Christ's empathy with it—as Millard Erickson notes, this moves the theological emphases from the atonement to the incarnation, or, in my view, means that our understanding of the atonement and the incarnation come to the fore in our theology of *healing* (how this works and what I mean by healing will be discussed later).

(3) Matthew frequently employs Old Testament texts in an illustrative fashion, rather than in the strict sense of predictions fulfilled (e.g. Matthew 2:15 [Hosea 11:1] about God's son called from Egypt; and 2:18 [Jeremiah 31:15] about Rachel weeping for her children).

Therefore, some combination of the second, third, and fourth views seems justified, which, possibly includes, but does not guarantee, physical healing (we can, of course, expect healing in the *Parousia*). This blend of views certainly expands our understanding of the nature and scope of *healing* and its connections with the atonement and the incarnation.

Don Carson asserts, Matthew 8:17 "cannot be used to justify healing on demand. This text and others clearly teach that there is healing in the Atonement; but similarly there is the promise of a resurrection body in the Atonement, even if believers do not inherit it until the *Parousia*. From the perspective of the NT writers, the cross is the basis for all benefits that accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies. The availability of any specific blessing can be determined only by appealing to the overall teaching of Scripture."¹⁷

Craig Keener provides an insightful treatment of the issues at hand when he writes:

Finally, Matthew informs his audience that healing was part of Jesus' mission, which God provided at great cost to Jesus (8:17)... The context in Isaiah 53 suggests that the servant's death would heal

¹³ A.B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (New York, NY: Christian Alliance, 1880).

¹⁴ Rowland V. Bingham and W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Bible and the Body: Healing in the Scriptures* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2007).

¹⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 840.

¹⁶ Donald A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 205–7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 207.

the nation from its sin (53:4–6, 8–9; cf. 1 Pet 2:22–25), a figurative usage (along with judgment) frequent in the prophets (13:15; Is 6:10; 57:18; Jer 3:22; 6:14; 8:11; 14:19; Hos 14:4; cf. 1QH 2.8–9; Sir 28:3; Pesiq. R. 44:8). But the broader context of Isaiah... shows God's eschatological concern for his people's complete wellness... suggesting secondary nuances of physical healing in 53:4–5 as well... The servant's suffering would restore to Israel eschatologically the benefits lost through sin... Thus Matthew cites Isaiah 53:4 to demonstrate that Jesus' mission of healing fulfills the character of the mission of the servant, who at the ultimate cost of his own life would reveal God's concern for a broken humanity. Matthew himself also recognizes that genuine physical healings can illustrate principles about spiritual healing (9:5–7, 12; 13:15)... Jesus' sacrifice to bear others' infirmities may also provide a model for the disciples; it appears elsewhere in early Christian parenesis (Rom 15:1–3; 1 Pet 2:20–24).¹⁸

The story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14–17 is primarily christological in character—it demonstrates Jesus' messianic mandate, fulfillment, authority, and concern (especially his love for the outcast).¹⁹ Even the quotation of Isaiah 53:4 is a christological device, a “fulfillment formula quotation” designed to “show that what is occurring in these healings is the fulfillment of the OT.”²⁰ Jesus is the Servant of the Lord, and he is about the ministry of healing, deliverance, and atonement, and the redefinition of reality through the values and priorities of his kingdom. Jesus identifies with the leper, the vulnerable, the outcast, and “humanity in its suffering.”²¹ This story is not so much about physical healing as it is about the *person* and *ministry* and *compassion* of Jesus Christ. “Is 53:4 guarantees no one healing in the present age. What is guaranteed is that Christ's atoning death will in the eschaton provide healing for all without exception. The healings through the ministry of Jesus and those experienced in our day are the first-fruits, the down payment, of the final experience of deliverance.”²²

1 PETER 2:21–25

²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²²“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”²⁵ For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The primary theme of 1 Peter is discipleship to Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to exhort and encourage Christians facing persecution, and to guide these Christians in matters of Christian identity, calling, hope, and the imitation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:21–25 is essentially about *imitatio Christi*—imitating and following the example of Jesus Christ. He left us an example to follow. He set an example of integrity in suffering characterized by uprightness, purity, honesty, and trust. He refused to retaliate, but, instead, entrusted himself to the One who judges justly. He did all this for us, bearing our sins, healing us, enabling us to

¹⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 273.

¹⁹ Note also the background of Isaiah 35:5–6 for understanding the christological import of Jesus' healing.

²⁰ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger; Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33A; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 211.

²¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. 2: *Commentary on Matthew VIII–XVIII* (The International Critical Commentary; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 38.

²² Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 33A, 211.

imitate him, helping us live for righteousness, and drawing us back to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

Jesus Christ serves as an example for us, but he is more than an example—he is our Saviour, Redeemer, Healer, Shepherd, and Overseer of our souls. He suffered and died not only as our example but also as our Lord and Saviour. We have gone astray, but he has brought us back to God. We are sick with sin, rebellion, and unrighteousness, but he has healed, restored, and made us righteous in the atoning incarnation, suffering, cross, and resurrection. We were subject to God's judgment, but he has given us unmerited, underserved mercy, righteousness, healing, and grace.

1 Peter 2:21–25 is not primarily about physical healing, and it is possible to say that this passage is not about such physical healing at all. It is about the imitation of Christ, following his example of integrity in suffering, and finding in him our source of righteousness, shepherding, mercy, and healing from the bondage and curse of sin. As the passage says, “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” “Like Isaiah before him, Peter uses physical healing as a metaphor for religious conversion, as he will explain in v 25 (in the Gospel tradition, cf. Mark 2:17; Luke 4:23).”²³ Jesus bore our sins vicariously on the cross, and we are now healed, that is, dead to sin, rebellion, and unrighteousness. Jesus's innocent suffering bears our sin, and he is our example of non-retaliation and endurance in suffering. Christ's atoning death provides an example for us in suffering, but also the solution to our waywardness, woundedness, and unrighteousness.²⁴ Peter Davids puts it well: “We no longer live that way. Instead, our lives are characterized by ‘righteousness,’ that is, the ethical life-style about which Peter has much to say. The salvation in Christ is not just a freedom from future judgment or from guilt, but a freedom from the life of sin and a freedom to live as God intends.”²⁵

In summary, our interpretation of Isaiah 53:4–6, Matthew 8:14–17, and 1 Peter 2:21–25 may include physical healing, but does not guarantee it. Even though there is certainly healing in the atonement (present healing, from time to time, and ultimate healing when Jesus Christ returns), these verses cannot be used to justify a theology of physical healing on demand.

²³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker; Waco, TX.: Word, 1989), 149.

²⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 203.

²⁵ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 113.

HEALING, INAUGURAL ESCHATOLOGY, AND THE RESURRECTION

While the atonement includes the possibility of physical healing in the present, this healing cannot be demanded, “any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies.”²⁶ It is only in the age to come that we are completely healed and receive our promised resurrection bodies. As Craig Blomberg puts it, “Charismatics have regularly appealed to [Matthew 8:17] in maintaining that there is healing for physical maladies in the atonement. Inasmuch as the healings consistently function as pointers to God’s in-breaking Kingdom, one should expect the present blessings of God’s reign at times to include miraculous recovery from illness. However, to require such healing of God this side of eternity loses sight of the future aspect of the Kingdom. Only in the world to come will sickness and death be banished altogether from believers’ lives. Claims that so far all who were sick in Jesus’ presence seem to have been cured must be balanced with the data of John 5:1–15, in which Christ selected only one of many sick people to receive healing. Nor is it adequate to reply that the others did not ask either. Jesus frequently worked miracles to create faith where it was not already present (e.g., Mark 4:35–41; 5:1–20), even while refraining from such activity in similar situations elsewhere (e.g., Mark 6:1–6a; 8:11–13). There is physical healing in the atonement for this age, but it is up to God in Christ to choose when and how to dispense it. Perfect healing, like the believer’s resurrection body, ultimately awaits Christ’s return.”²⁷

Inaugural eschatology affirms that the kingdom of God has *present* and *future* dimensions. The end is already here and the kingdom is already inaugurated, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it is yet to be consummated. It is *now but not yet*. The ultimate future reality was brought into the present through the person and work of Jesus Christ, as he demonstrated the *current presence* of the kingdom in his life, death, and resurrection—yet it is only in the *final consummation* that all disease, suffering, conflict, and death are no more (Revelation 21:4). John Dickson writes that in the ministry of Jesus,

Evil was overthrown, frail bodies restored, nature itself was put right. The “kingdom of God” has in *miniature* come upon them... As much as the miracles point to Jesus’ compassion and authority, fundamentally, they preview the renewal of all things in the kingdom to which Jesus invited his hearers... Christian hope is thus *confidently restless*: it praises God for the preview (in Jesus’ life) and pleads for the finale (in the “kingdom come”), when evil will be overthrown, humanity healed, and creation itself restored.²⁸

Because the kingdom is *present*, believers are healed from their sin and unrighteousness, and are physically healed *from time-to-time*. Because the kingdom is *future*, our ultimate physical healing, like our resurrected bodies, awaits the final, decisive, *future reality*. The life, kingdom message, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ witnesses to this, so we are “confidently restless,” awaiting the final restoration of all things, including our bodies. Bodily healing is integrally associated with the atonement, just as is every other blessing promised us by God. However, while people experience divine healing on occasions, and this is clearly related to Christ’s atonement for our sins, “God has not seen fit to shower us with all physical blessings now in the way he has with spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3); we await the final consummation of God’s

²⁶ Carson, *Matthew*, 207.

²⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 22, 145.

²⁸ John Dickson, *A Spectator's Guide to Jesus: An Introduction to the Man from Nazareth* (Sydney: Blue Bottle, 2005), 44–45.

redemptive plan, and this is our “blessed hope”—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).”²⁹

We are inspired, comforted, and given hope by both the present and future dimensions of the kingdom, that is, its full, inaugurated, and eschatological nature. Jesus and the NT authors characterize this present age as one characterized by grief, sinfulness, struggle, and evil, along with signs of the redemptive in-breaking of the kingdom of God. The age to come, however, will be one of joy, holiness, peace, rest, and comfort. The kingdom of God in the age to come will be the dwelling of the righteous and the healed.³⁰ The whole created order will be transformed and healed so that it reflects its original glory,³¹ we will live a transformed existence characterized by resurrection life,³² fellowship will be restored with God,³³ and this restoration is likened to a wedding feast.³⁴ Such descriptions of the present and future kingdom of God give us hope in the midst of pain and struggle, and encourage us to continue proclaiming the good news of the kingdom—for its presence and coming are realities orchestrated by the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF HEALING

The church needs to develop a broader understanding of *healing*, and its relationship to our theology of the atonement. If Craig Keener is right and “Matthew informs his audience that healing was part of Jesus’ mission, which God provided at great cost to Jesus (8:17),” we need to consider the various dimensions of healing associated with the atonement (and with Christ’s empathetic connection with our human condition in the incarnation), while recognizing that ultimate healing is in the *Parousia*. We need to explore what it means for us to experience physical, emotional, relational, spiritual, and other *healing*, thanks to the atoning life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We need to be careful here. Atonement is primarily about cancellation of guilt, about God’s work in liberating individuals, the church, and the created order from guilt and sin. However, our theology of the atonement can expand our understanding of the nature and scope of *healing* and its connections with the atonement, the incarnation, and the resurrection. We have seen that physical healing is available to all through the atonement, but, thanks to the *already but not yet* nature of the kingdom, it is not available to all in this present life. It is only guaranteed in the age to come. Douglas Moo concludes that, “The atoning death of Christ provides for the healing of all our diseases—but nothing in Matthew or in the NT implies that this healing will take place in this life. Indeed, as we have seen, the NT gives reason to think that triumph over physical disease, like triumph over physical death, will not come for most believers until the future

²⁹ W. Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement,” *Didaskalia* 3 (1991): 37.

³⁰ Matthew 5:20; 7:21; Mark 9:47.

³¹ Matthew 19:28.

³² Luke 20:34–35.

³³ Matthew 5:8; 25:21, 23.

³⁴ Matthew 22:1–14; 25:1–12.

redemption of the body.”³⁵

Although ultimate bodily healing is in the resurrection of our bodies, we should also acknowledge that God is able to heal bodily if he chooses to do so. Therefore, we should not neglect to pray for those who are sick. However, we also need to explore the nature of *healing* associated with the atonement in its broadest sense—liberation from sin, restoration of relationships, freedom from addictions and slavery, rejection of idolatries, and peace, freedom, and joy in the emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our lives. As a sign, foretaste, herald, and witness to the *now but not yet* kingdom, the church participates in this healing ministry, for the sake of Jesus Christ and his eschatological mission in the world. The church is called to demonstrate this healing in its corporate life and ethics, its public witness and service, and in its faithful pursuit of the healing mission of God. The church does this best with a mature, biblical view of the kingdom of God, and this kingdom’s *present* and *future* dimensions.

³⁵ Douglas J. Moo, “Divine Healing in the Health and Wealth Gospel,” *Trinity Journal* 9 (1988): 204.

GOOD FENCES, GOOD NEIGHBOURS?: HOLINESS, BOUNDARIES, AND MISSION

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between the communal boundaries of the church and the life of holiness and mission to which it is summoned in the gospel, with particular reference to the distinction between ‘bounded sets’ and ‘centred sets’ in recent missiological theory and missional ecclesiology. Drawing on the language of the *First London Confession* and the implied ecclesiology of Paul’s Corinthian letters, it argues that the church’s holiness-in-mission requires neither a fortress nor a boundaryless blur, but the kind of ‘good fences’ that assist the followers of Jesus to be ‘good neighbours’ to the people around them who do not know Christ.

‘Good fences’, it is argued, are communal boundaries that (i) are drawn as a circumference around the centre of the saving, ruling presence of Christ; (ii) accurately represent the distinctions and disciplines of confession and conduct that mark out those who follow Jesus from those who do not know him; (iii) make explicit the covenantal commitment of a community of believers to live under those disciplines together; and (iv) allow for the missional involvement of God’s people in the world and the hospitable welcome within the church of those who are in the process of learning Christ.

MENDING WALL

“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall...”¹ begins the famous poem by Robert Frost, in which he voices the ruminations of a New England orchardist about the elemental forces (weather? gravity? elves?) that make new gaps in the orchard’s dry-stone wall each year. Year by year, fresh gaps appear across the season of the winter ground-swell, and year by year, when spring comes, the speaker and his neighbour walk the length of the wall, one on each side, rebuilding it.

Re-building a wall like that is hard work:

We have to use a spell to make them balance:
“Stay where you are until our backs are turned!”
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.²

But the owner of the neighbouring property is still stubbornly insistent on the importance of the annual ritual—even though in this part of the boundary line, with an apple orchard on one side and a pine forest on the other, a wall hardly seems necessary. To him it is an unquestionable, almost sacred duty:

...I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me~
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, “Good fences make good neighbors.”³

¹ Frost, Robert, *Selected Early Poems* (Claremont: Coyote Canyon, 2008), 51.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 52.

The ‘something’ in nature that resists a wall has its parallel in human social interactions. In human nature, too— or at least in the way that human nature functions in a modern pluralist society— there is something that doesn’t like walls. The ancient impulses of tradition and tribalism that build boundaries around and between us are pitted against other impulses less friendly to such divisions. And in the context of a socially fluid, multi-faith culture, these other impulses can be particularly powerful.

One recent study of this dynamic is Robert Putnam and David Campbell’s massive, meticulously-documented book, *American Grace*. In it, the authors paint a vast and detailed picture of the ways in which the forces of neighbourliness and interfaith relationship (the “My Pal Al Effect” and the “Aunt Susan Effect”) work together to erode the boundary walls of doctrine and lifestyle that pastors, priests and rabbis keep attempting to build and maintain around modern America’s various religious communities.⁴

Religious leaders may talk about the eternal division between believer and unbeliever and about lifestyles and behaviours that are under divine judgement, but if (as most Americans do) you have an Aunt Susan who belongs to one of the categories that is on the wrong side of the wall, it is hard to keep believing that those kind of boundary lines are real, or that they matter:

“You know that your faith says ... she’s not going to go to heaven, but I mean, come on ... it’s Aunt Susan, you know, and if anybody's going to heaven it's Aunt Susan. So every American is sort of caught in this dilemma, that their theology tells them one thing, but their personal life experience tells them to be more tolerant.”⁵

BOUNDARYLESS COMMUNITY?

In a context like that, Christian talk about ‘holiness’ and ‘church discipline’ can sound (at best) quaint and (at worst) oppressive, legalistic, and obscurantist. Walking the boundary-walls of the church week by week, putting back the stones that have fallen off the top, can feel like the futile endeavour of an ‘old-stone savage’, locked into a losing battle against nature and gravity, too stubborn or too stupid to go behind the sayings and traditions handed down from the past.

Perhaps, one might argue, the time has come for a sort of boundaryless Christianity, in which there is a sense of belonging and a chance to explore, without the need to draw lines of belief and behaviour that divide people into the categories of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. What if tearing down the boundaries created exactly the kind of proximity and interaction in which the mission of the gospel could flourish? What if an approach of that sort turned out to be not a brand new idea, a way of accommodating to postmodern times, but a closer approximation to the way things were done by Jesus himself and among his first followers?

⁴ Robert D. Putnam et al., *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 134–160, 443–550.

⁵ Robert Putnam, quoted at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130264527>, accessed 21 Nov 2011.

Boundaries and Centres

One of the more nuanced and imaginative proposals for how we should address these questions can be found in missiologist Paul Hiebert's distinction between "centred sets" and "bounded sets",⁶ popularised more recently in books including Darrell Guder and Lois Barrett's *Missional Church*,⁷ Jim Peterson's *Church without Walls*,⁸ and Mike Frost and Alan Hirsch's *The Shaping of Things to Come*.⁹ Frost and Hirsch's book offers a memorable and frequently quoted explanation of the distinction:

The attractional church is a bounded set. That is, it is a set of people clearly marked off from those who do not belong to it. Churches thus mark themselves in a variety of ways. Having a church membership roll is an obvious one. This mechanism determines who's in and who's out. The missional-incarnational church, though, is a centered set. This means that rather than drawing a border to determine who belongs and who doesn't, a centered set is defined by its core values, and people are not seen as in or out, but as closer or further away from the center. In that sense, everyone is in and no one is out. Though some people are close to the center and others far from it, everyone is potentially part of the community in its broadest sense.

A useful illustration is to think of the difference between wells and fences. In some farming communities, the farmer might build fences around their properties to keep their livestock in and the livestock of neighbouring farms out. This is a bounded set. But in rural communities where farms or ranches cover an enormous geographic area, fencing the property is out of the question. In our home of Australia, ranches (called stations) are so vast that fences are superfluous. Under these conditions a farmer has to sink a bore and create a well, a precious water supply in the Outback. It is assumed that livestock, though they will stray, will never roam too far from the well, lest they die. This is a centered set. As long as there is a supply of clean water, the livestock will remain close by.¹⁰

Pulled out of their context, quoted and requoted in books and blog-posts, those paragraphs from *The Shaping of Things to Come* can be read as an argument for abandoning the concepts of 'insider' and 'outsider' altogether, dissolving any sense of membership or belonging into something implicit, undefined and relative. On this reading, 'centred set' and 'bounded set' are mutually exclusive categories, and churches and church-planters need to make a choice between the defunct 'bounded set' way of operating and the new-model 'centred set'.

Within the larger context of the book (and read alongside other books by the same authors)¹¹ an absolute dichotomy of that sort seems less likely.¹² The intention of the contrast is not so much to argue for

⁶ Paul Hiebert, "Sets and Structures: A Study in Church Patterns," in *New Horizons in World Mission* (ed. D. J. Hesselgrave; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 217–227.

⁷ Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁸ Jim Peterson, *Church without Walls* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991).

⁹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003).

¹⁰ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 47.

¹¹ See for example the discussions of the "covenantal" dimension that is listed as one of the bare minimum requirements for the existence of a church in Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 147–154.

¹² See also the discussion in Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 207–210, which argues that the mission community should be viewed as "a bounded set [the 'covenant community'] within a centered-set organisation".

abolishing boundaries altogether as to question their usefulness as the *defining* element of a church—to redirect attention from the boundaries to the centre, and to suggest the possibility of a variety of ways in which people might be said to ‘belong’ to a particular church community.¹³

Whichever interpretation is adopted, however, the contrast between ‘centered’ and ‘bounded’ set churches raises questions that are worth addressing. Does the church need to have visible, explicit boundaries that distinguish between insiders and outsiders? If not, what does belonging mean, and how is it expressed? And if there is a need for boundaries around belonging, what shape and what attributes should those boundaries have if they are to serve the calling of the church to be a display in the world of the wisdom and the glory of God?

Baptists, Boundaries and the Gathered Church

For Baptists, whose theological tradition makes much of a “gathered church” ecclesiology, questions like these are particularly pressing. The early Baptists of the seventeenth century insisted against the state-church structures of their day that the local church is (in the language of the *First London Confession*) “a company of visible Saints, called and separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement.”¹⁴

The metaphorical language with which the early Baptists articulated their vision of the gathered church is strikingly similar to the imagery of ‘wells’ and ‘fences’ evoked by Frost and Hirsch. In the language of the *First London Confession*, the two images are evoked not as competing alternatives but as complementary metaphors—the writers of the confession picture the church as both “a walled sheepfold” and “a watered garden”, in which God has established “the fountains and springs of his heavenly grace continually flowing forth”:

Thither ought all men to come, of all estates, that acknowledge [Christ] to be their Prophet, Priest, and King, to be enrolled amongst his household servants, to be under his heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold, and watered garden, to have communion here with the Saints, that they may be made to be partakers of their inheritance in the Kingdom of God.¹⁵

The confessional language of the seventeenth century points toward one way in which contemporary Baptists might attempt to resolve the question of the relationship between the centre and the boundaries of the church. According to this approach, the two metaphors are to be placed side by side, with the implication that ‘centred set’ and ‘bounded set’ perspectives are to be viewed as coexisting in harmonious complementarity, as ways of describing the single reality of the visible, local church.

But within a tradition that insists emphatically on the supreme authority of Scripture over the faith and life of the church, an appeal of this sort to the confessional formulations of the past can only ever offer

¹³ This reading of the way in which the imagery is intended by the authors was confirmed in personal conversation by Mike Frost.

¹⁴ *First London Confession* (1644) Art. XXXIII.

¹⁵ *First London Confession*, Art. XXXIV.

a penultimate and provisional answer. Both contemporary missiological proposals and traditional doctrinal formulations must be tested against Scripture. And the perspective of the tradition needs not only to be *verified* by Scripture; it also needs to be deepened and clarified and elucidated. It is one thing to place the two metaphors in juxtaposition; it is another to articulate the nature of their inter-relationship and its implications for the life and mission of the church.

GOOD FENCES: HOLINESS-IN-MISSION IN 1 CORINTHIANS

One obvious place within Scripture to which we might turn with questions of this sort is Paul's letters to the first-century church in Corinth, with their explicit focus on what it means for the church to be "the church of God that is in Corinth ... sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints", their detailed attention to what the outworkings of that identity might look like in practice, and their emphatic insistence that Christians be committed together to the mission of God in the world, actively seeking the good and the salvation of others beyond the circle of their own fellow-believers.

When we read Paul's Corinthian letters with those questions in mind, at least four assertions can be made about the centre and boundaries of the church, and how they relate to the church's calling to holiness-in-mission.

Holiness-In-Mission Requires Boundaries

First, and perhaps most obviously, Paul's Corinthian letters reinforce the necessity that there be boundaries of some sort that delineate the membership of the church. The very notion of the church as "the body of Christ" and believers as "members" of that body (1 Corinthians 12:27) implies a bounded community within which the members own a particular responsibility for one another and relate to one another with a deliberate solidarity. Entry into the community involves the crossing of a line, symbolised in the dramatic action of baptism. Certainly, there is a process of "learning Christ" that precedes baptism and continues after it (cf. Eph 4:17–5:2), but the drama of baptism still makes the stark visual assertion that if someone is in Christ then somewhere in that process of learning Christ a line was crossed, and by the mysterious action of God a person was "baptised in the one Spirit ... into the one body" (1 Cor 12:13).

The ritual boundary-crossing of Christian baptism does not, of course, guarantee the certainty that everyone within the visible church is a believing, hoping, loving, persevering follower of Jesus. "Our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," yet "God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness" (1 Cor 10:1-2, 5). Community boundaries are no infallible indicator of who is "in" and who is "out", as far as God is concerned.

But if it is possible for a person to be "removed from among you" (1 Cor 5:2); if there is a meaningful distinction between "those outside" and "those inside" (1 Cor 5:12), or between "the unrighteous" and "the

saints” (1 Cor 6:1); if a widow is free to remarry whomever she chooses, but “only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39), then a totally boundaryless community in which no-one can ever have any idea who is to be considered as inside and who is to be considered as outside is not an option.

Thomas Oden’s words are apt:

There is a fantasy abroad that the Christian community can have a center without a circumference. Since we gather around Jesus, it is argued, it is our center, not our boundaries, that matter. But this is the persistent illusion of compulsive hypertolerance. A community with no boundaries can neither have a center nor be a community.¹⁶

Holiness-In-Mission is About the Centre Before it is About the Boundaries

Holiness-in-mission requires boundaries. But the boundaries are not what comes first, or what matters most: holiness is about what is at the centre before it is about the lines around the circumference. The status of Israel as the ‘holy nation’ in the Old Testament was protected and demarcated by the various laws (circumcision, food laws, Sabbaths, purity codes) that circumscribed the nation’s life, but the symbolic heart of Israel’s holiness was not the law around the nation but the presence of God in the “holy of holies” in the nation’s midst.

Similarly, when Paul calls in 2 Cor 6:17 for the Corinthians to “come out from them, and be separate from them,” the rationale for the summons to holiness is the prior promise of God, that “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor 6:16). It is because “we have these promises” (2 Cor 7:1) that we are to “cleanse ourselves from every defilement . . . making holiness perfect in the fear of God.”

A concept of holiness that is principally or solely about the distinctions and dividing lines between the church and the world is a whitewashed tomb. The first question for a church is not, “how separated are you from the world?”, but “[is] Jesus Christ in you?” (2 Cor 13:5). If the answer to that question is not yes, then no amount of separatedness can compensate.

Holiness-In-Mission Requires the Right Boundaries

If the visible church’s boundaries are to serve the mission of God and promote his glory in the world, then it is important not only that they exist, and that they can be seen, but also that they are drawn in the right places. The very existence of the church in Corinth, after all, was the result of the redrawing of the boundary-lines that had defined the people of God under the old covenant, and Paul’s willingness (in explicit imitation of Jesus) to keep crossing the old boundary-lines in the cause of mission (1 Cor 9:19-23; 11:1).

Boundaries drawn too narrowly (e.g. the elitist Corinthian boundaries drawn around the “spiritual” people with their special gifts and the wealthy people with their special meals) dishonour Christ by dividing his body, and humiliating and excluding people who ought to have been welcomed and cherished (1 Cor

¹⁶ Thomas C. Oden, “Why We Believe in Heresy,” *Christianity Today* 40 (1996): 12–13.

11:23-34; 12:12-31). Boundaries drawn too loosely dishonour Christ by implying that there is no difference between those who know him and those who don't, and that his saving rule over the church is an empty ceremonial rule that can be disregarded with impunity (cf. 1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:9-20; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

Boundaries that are all about doctrinal subscription and nothing to do with lifestyle imply that the claims of Christ extend no further than the brain and the lips; boundaries that are all about lifestyle and nothing to do with doctrine imply that then church's unity is merely a matter of behavioural conformity, and has no basis in shared truth and common confession.

Boundaries that are drawn in the right place do not in themselves create or guarantee the church's holiness, but they do present a reminder to the church and a representation to the world of the ways of the God who dwells in the church as his temple, and the shape of the repenting-and-believing response to the gospel to which the church is called.

Holiness-In-Mission Requires Permeable Boundaries

Finally, if the church's holiness is to be a genuine, visible, holiness-in-mission, then it matters not only that the boundaries are present, and that they are drawn in the right places, but also that they are permeable boundaries – not ten-foot walls topped with razor-wire to keep the church out of the world and the world out of the church, but the kind of low, gated fences that allow for visibility and access in both directions.¹⁷

Across the letter of 1 Corinthians, Paul repeatedly insists on the importance of Christians maintaining contact and relationship with their pagan neighbours (1 Cor 5:9-13; 7:12-16; 9:19-27; 10:23-11:1), and his prescriptions for the shape and conduct of their church gatherings presuppose that they will be a hospitable community among whom “outsiders and unbelievers”¹⁸ will be present with the opportunity to observe things that would cause them to exclaim, “God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:25).

It is all very well to say with the seventeenth century Baptists that:

thither ought all men to come, of all estates, that acknowledge [Christ] to be their Prophet, Priest, and King, to be enrolled amongst his household servants, to be under his heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold, and watered garden, to have communion here with the Saints, that they may be made to be partakers of their inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

But if that vision is to be fulfilled, it requires a church that understands itself as having some responsibilities to those outside its walls who have not yet come, or have not yet acknowledged Christ,¹⁹ and enough traffic across the walls for them to know themselves invited, and to have a chance to see something of the goodness of life within. The holiness of “visible saints” ought to be evident not only to the scrutiny of the church's discipline but also the observation of the surrounding community of unbelievers. A happy, holy, hidden gathering, oblivious to the world beyond their walls, is hardly a faithful expression of the fellowship created by the gospel.

¹⁷ On “permeable boundaries,” see David Arthur Desilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 300.

¹⁸ NRSV. Literally, “uninitiated [*idiōtai*] or unbelievers”.

¹⁹ This was of course, in essence, the point that William Carey argued for in the following century, in his *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*.

GOOD FENCES, GOOD NEIGHBOURS

The social dynamics of a pluralist, multi-faith culture are certainly a test for the holiness and confessional integrity of the church; for us, no less than for the first-century Corinthians, it can prove true that “bad company ruins good morals” (1 Cor 15:33). But the very dynamics of neighbourliness and interfaith relationship that can make it hard to maintain the distinctive beliefs and behaviours of the Christian community are the same dynamics that enable those beliefs and behaviours to be communicated and made visible to others. “My Pal Al” and “Aunt Susan” are not only a threat to the distinctiveness of the church; they are also among the closest observers of the church’s life and the most immediate audience to whom its testimony is directed.

The conditions of our time are not a reason for the church to tear down all the fences of membership, doctrinal definition and communal discipline; nor are they a reason to wall ourselves in and hide from contact with the surrounding world. What the church’s holiness-in-mission requires is neither a fortress nor a boundaryless blur, but the kind of “good fences” that genuinely assist the followers of Jesus to be “good neighbours” to the people around them who do not know Christ.

What kind of fences are those? Good fences are fences that are drawn as a circumference around the indispensable centre of the saving, ruling presence of Christ; fences that do not divide believer from believer but accurately represent the distinctions and disciplines of confession and conduct that mark out those who follow Jesus from those who do not know him; fences that make explicit the common, covenantal commitment of a community of believers to live under those disciplines together; and fences that allow for the missional involvement of God’s people in the world and the hospitable welcome within the activities of the church of not-yet-Christians who are in the process of learning Christ.

In twenty-first century Australia and New Zealand, just as much as in first-century Corinth, those are the kind of fences that the church’s holiness requires.²⁰

²⁰ An earlier version of this article was published in *The Lever* 7 (2012): 3–7.

FAITHFUL THINKING: THE ROLE OF THE SEMINARY IN PROMOTING A THOUGHTFUL CHRISTIAN FAITH¹

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ABSTRACT

Noting that two common accusations against the Christian faith are that it is morally bankrupt and intellectually vacuous, *Faithful Thinking* explores ways in which theological educators and the seminaries and theological colleges of which they are a part, can help develop a morally robust and intellectually responsible understanding of Christianity. Noting that there is often a link between faithful thinking and faithful living, the paper identifies some toxic expressions of faith, and urges seminaries to take seriously their role in producing graduates who are both pastorally and prophetically sensitive. It then explores ways in which theologians can do theology not only for the church, but also for the marketplace.

It is alleged that George Bernard Shaw once quipped “5% of the people think, 15 % of the people think they think, 80% of the people would rather die than think!” If Shaw was even remotely accurate, we might well question the need for our topic “Faithful Thinking: The Role of the Seminary in Promoting a Thoughtful Christian Faith 101.” Many of us who are engaged in theological education are conscious that our intellectual efforts are often viewed with suspicion—even antagonism. I well remember a sermon I once endured when the preacher of the day flung a copy of Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* from the pulpit, ordering one of his elders to burn it immediately because of its supposed heresy.² I’ve no doubt that many copies of Rob Bell’s *Love Wins* are facing a similar fate.³ Generally speaking, when theologians raise new questions or point to problems with old answers, they are greeted with little enthusiasm. Not that a thinking Christianity would uncritically accept new ideas, but it would be refreshing to operate in an environment that was not instinctively opposed to and threatened by the new.

And so the question for today: Do we need a thoughtful Christianity and if so, what role do theological educators and the seminaries they are part of, have to play in promoting faithful thinking?

While we could argue as to what constitute the current major missiological blocks to the Christian faith, my suggestion would be that two significant obstacles are that Christianity is increasingly portrayed as being morally bankrupt and intellectually vacuous. While Anselm argued that faith should seek

¹ Paper presented to the Commission on Theological Education and Leadership Development of the Baptist World Alliance, meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 7 July 2011. A modified version of this article has been published as Brian Harris, “Faithful Thinking: The Task Ahead for Christian Higher Education,” in *Vose Seminary at Fifty: From 'Preach the Word' to 'Come Grow'* (eds. Nathan Hobby, John Olley and Michael O’Neil; Preston: Mosaic, 2013), 233—244.

² Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (trans., James W. Leitch; London: SCM, 1967).

³ Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

understanding, we seem to have birthed a generation where faith simply seeks new experiences.⁴ The morality and relevance of those experiences is often uncritically embraced, and over time this frequently leads to toxic expressions of faith. There is a link between thinking and doing—and faulty theology leads to blemished lifestyles and flawed faith communities. While we might lament the manner in which the new atheists are ridiculing Christianity, we need to be willing to explore our role in having provoked the onslaught.⁵

On its own, exploration is never enough. We need to find the courage and will to change where change is necessary. Let's then look at the accusations of moral and intellectual poverty and explore the possible role of the seminary in turning this tide, as it promotes a thoughtful Christian faith.

BEYOND MORAL POVERTY

While in the past atheists were usually content to justify their lack of belief in God's existence on the basis of *intellectual* objections, it is now increasingly common for that justification to be based on *moral* objections. To quote from the title of Christopher Hitchen's bestselling book, it is alleged that *God is not great* and that *religion poisons everything*. Some would have us believe that religious faith is an evil akin to greed, poverty and disease and that it is a significant social problem to be obliterated if we are to attain a more utopian existence. While the famous G.K. Chesterton paradox claims "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried," a growing tide impatiently dismisses the sentiment as escapist and is unwilling to endure what they claim is the poisonous harvest of religious faith.

That harvest is described in different ways, but ten common components (in no particular order) include:

- 1) Religious warfare
- 2) Colonial exploitation
- 3) Racial bigotry
- 4) The oppression of women
- 5) Homophobia
- 6) The exploitation of the environment
- 7) Retarding the progress of science, especially medical science
- 8) Academic censorship with a resultant intellectual dishonesty
- 9) Intolerance of anything new
- 10) Hypocrisy

⁴ See my article, "Beyond Bebbington" where I argue that contemporary evangelicalism is in danger of being reduced to a movement of passionate piety. Brian Harris, "Beyond Bebbington: The Quest for an Evangelical Identity in a Postmodern Era," *Churchman* 122, no. 3 (2008): 201—219.

⁵ Examples of the work of some of the new atheists include Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Sam Harris, *Letters to a Christian Nation* (New York: Random, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

Clearly there is nothing attractive about this list, and if it is seen to be the normative result of religious faith, evangelists should expect audiences who are increasingly hostile to their message – presupposing they can find any audience at all.

David Kinnaman’s study of the attitude of 16–29 year old Americans towards Christians saw six recurring images.⁶ They considered Christians to be:

- 1) Hypocritical
- 2) Interested in ‘saving’ people rather than in relating to them
- 3) Antihomosexual
- 4) Sheltered
- 5) Too political
- 6) Judgemental

Again, the list is far from winsome, and represents significant barriers to the likely receptivity to messages about the love and mercy of God.

We could argue that these negative images are the fruit of the Christendom era, when membership of the Christian faith was assumed for almost all who lived in the Western World. Christendom was often more about sanctioning the status quo than following Jesus, and we could be hopeful that its demise might free the church to find more authentic expressions of faith in this “after Christendom” era.⁷ If the harvest of Christendom was our poisonous list of ten (and I acknowledge that it is excessively one sided to suggest that the list is fair),⁸ is it possible that in the post Christian era a Christianity that more closely represents and reflects the teaching of Jesus might emerge?

For this to occur, it is important that we recognise and renounce those elements of religious belief that leave us vulnerable to developing a toxic faith. Given that the seminary has a key role in affirming what constitutes valid Christian faith, is it too much to expect the seminary to have a comparable role in stemming the tide of dysfunctional counterfeits to the message of Jesus?

To be fair, not all the fruit of Christendom was negative. Christians can claim credit for many of the positive social advances made in the last 2000 years. While multiple social factors are invariably at work in societal evolution, it is not fair to explore the abolition of slavery, the protection of the rights of women and children, the development of the welfare state or the shift in focus from retributive to restorative justice, without repeatedly referring to the Christian faith that motivated and inspired most of those who championed these causes. And they represent a small selection of an impressive array of humanitarian achievements.⁹

⁶ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity... And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

⁷ For a discussion of and rationale for the conclusion that we live in a “post-Christendom” era, see Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004); Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

⁸ For a very different (and far more positive) interpretation of the churches contribution to society, see Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

⁹ A simple but thought provoking introduction to the topic is found in Dave Andrews, *People of Compassion* (Blackburn, VIC.: TEAR Australia, 2008).

Sadly, there is also a shadow side. There have been many times in the history of the church when it has been supportive of an oppressive agenda, which on occasion has revealed itself in racism, sexism, homophobia, militarism, ecological and economic exploitation, cultural insensitivity and more beside.¹⁰

Even if not actively supporting exploitation, faith can easily wear unattractive masks.¹¹ Let's explore three masks which will have to disappear if a more authentic Christian faith is to be birthed, and let's ponder the role of the seminary in ensuring their demise.

First, there is faith as escapism. While it is perhaps understandable that African American slaves longed for the day when the sweet chariot would swing low to carry them home, it is more difficult to understand why those whose lives are saturated with material abundance are sometimes so heavenly minded that they are of little use to those on the fringes of life, indeed those who are specially dear to the heart of God. A thoughtful Christian faith will ensure that eschatology is used not as a crutch justifying escapism, but as a motivator of daring obedience. As people who have been privileged to see the end of the story, we know that ultimate victory belongs to the people of God. This should give us the courage to live in the light of God's coming Kingdom in the present. Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz suggests that all theological construction should be eschatologically oriented, and his insight is important.¹² Allowing the future to guide the present will see a radically new form of Christianity birthed. Imagine, for example, if we truly lived backwards from the Pauline insight that the ultimate reality is that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"—to quote Galatians 3:28. This would indeed birth an infectious different Christianity, one worth following. That this vision flows from good theology must not be overlooked. While it is true that many in the pews are enthralled by the *Left Behind* series, those of us in the seminary have a responsibility to extend their eschatological horizon. Our silence when profound doctrines are reduced to silliness is not acceptable. In the end, error is best combated with truth. We need to paint a compelling portrait of a thoroughly engaged and incarnated Christian faith, one able to strive in the present because it has had a glimpse of the future.

A second caricature left over from the Christendom era is that faith is often confused with the status quo. This mask bears no resemblance to what's required to be an authentic Christ follower, but nonetheless for many people things are good provided they've been around for more than 20 years. Nostalgia, rather than a commitment to a daring faith agenda, is the driver. Onlookers fail to find it inspiring. Perhaps we should stop thinking of ourselves as Christians, but as Christ followers. This is not a pedantic quibble. To stop viewing ourselves as static nouns and to introduce images of action might help to remind us that the Christian vision is of a

¹⁰ So, for example, Jim Wallis, speaking of the mixed legacy of Evangelicalism, laments, "Evangelicals in this century have a history of going along with the culture on the big issues and taking their stand on the smaller issues. That has been one of the serious problems of evangelical religion. Today, many evangelicals no longer just acquiesce to the culture on the larger economic and political issues, but actively promote the culture's worst values on these matters." Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion* (Herts: Lion, 1981), 25.

¹¹ The following three paragraphs are a slightly modified form of part of a brief newspaper article I wrote in 2007. Brian Harris, "When Faith Is the Problem," *The Advocate* (April 2007): 2.

¹² See for example Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the Twenty First Century* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993); Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

daring journey of discipleship. It is a journey that does not bypass the Cross and it is one that would never be undertaken without the assurance that resurrection follows crucifixion. If any of this sounds like the status quo, then the status quo is not what it used to be!

Again, the role of the seminary in this paradigm shift is critical. For years we have focused on producing *pastorally sensitive* graduates. Without sacrificing these gains, perhaps we can evaluate how effective we have been in producing *prophetically sensitive* graduates. If we are not satisfied with the harvest, perhaps we can look at what we have been planting. After all, we reap what we sow, and if our own vision of the radical agenda implicit in being a Christ follower is inadequate, the harvest will reflect the shortfall.

Third there is faith as smugness and self-righteousness. While most have renounced the wagging finger, the image of Christians as people who see themselves as morally superior to lesser mortals and who tut tut at the folly of those who don't share their faith, persists. That is not to suggest that we are people without a moral vision. However, a thoughtful Christianity is not proclaimed in "Thou Shalt" terms. It is portrayed invitationally. It recognises that it is one vision amongst other competing visions and that it needs to woo others by the winsomeness of those who have been captured by its contours.

Yet again, the seminary has an important role to play in brokering this change. By our own hospitality and willingness to think through the likely outcome of alternate moral visions, we model an engaged involvement in the issues that matter to those around us. Rather than simply saying no, we thoughtfully explore the moral issues of our day with the community in which we are incarnated. Because it is a genuine exploration, we do not proclaim our answers in advance. We will indeed be guided by the biblical text and the traditions of the church, but at times we will be surprised at the way in which contemporary issues highlight areas of biblical truth we have previously not observed. Clark Pinnock has alerted us to the possibility of discovering not only past, but also future meanings in the biblical text and his insight is one with which we should creatively engage.¹³

These three false masks—faith as escapism, faith as the status quo and faith as self-righteousness—alert us to an important truth. Faith can spark life's loftiest journeys but paradoxically, can also accompany and bolster its most misguided and tragic detours.

Because of the potentially abusive nature of faith it is important that the seminary highlights some of the warning signs that it is at risk of proving toxic. Many of our students start with the quaint assumption that so long as something is cloaked in Christian language, it must be good. The harvest of this naivety is often devastating. While an exhaustive list is beyond the scope of this talk, danger signals that point to toxic faith include an insistence on unquestioning faith, or faith as compulsion instead of faith as invitation, or where there is legalism without love, or any form of faith that aims for power and control and attempts to justify the unjustifiable in the name of God. By simply alerting Christ followers to the possibility of toxic faith the seminary makes an important contribution to its destruction. Robust Christ following is the call of

¹³ Clark H. Pinnock, "Biblical Texts—Past and Future Meanings," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 71—81.

the day. Nothing less will persuade a cynical world to revise its largely negative verdict on the previous 2000 years of church history.

BEYOND INTELLECTUAL POVERTY

If the seminary has a role in pointing towards a Christian faith that will move us beyond our moral poverty, its role in articulating a thoughtful Christian faith to move us beyond our intellectual poverty is even more important. Not that it is a role we automatically embrace.

I saw it in an ethics class I taught at an institution I'll leave unnamed. Prior to lecturing on some of the ethical issues raised by genetic engineering, I asked the class of around 50 students how many of them were in favour of this growing discipline. While I had expected the majority to express reservations, I was a little surprised that without exception they all declared their opposition. Wondering how I would provoke interesting discussion in a class with such a homogenous view, I asked if someone could tell me a little bit about genetic engineering and what it involved. An awkward silence settled over the group. It soon became painfully obvious that the only thing the class knew about the subject was that they were opposed to it. While I would like to think that such examples are rare, I fear they are not.

Don't misunderstand me. As I got to know the students in that class I discovered them to be delightful, spiritually committed, good hearted and intelligent human beings. They had simply never realised the need to seriously engage with the issues of the 21st century—indeed, they didn't really know what those issues were. Being taught from a syllabus that had seen little development in the last 30 years, and being educated in an environment suspicious of all things new, their response was hardly surprising. My sad conclusion was that the institution they were part of was actually acting as a brake on their intellectual development. Rather than producing faithful thinkers ready to engage the questions of our time, they were forming pious graduates best suited to an intellectual ghetto where they could hibernate in splendid irrelevance. It was such a waste of excellent potential. Stephen Carter has suggested that the great problem with religion in the United States is not its neglect, but its trivialization.¹⁴ There is no need to limit his observation to the USA, as this example makes clear.

This is all the more disturbing when we remember that we live in an era of the democratization of knowledge. In my country, Australia, the second recommendation of the Bradley review into Higher Education is that by 2020 40% of Australians between the ages of 25-34 should have at least a first degree—and it outlines the steps the country must take to make this possible.¹⁵ Several countries already exceed this target, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden and Finland.¹⁶ Globally we are seeing an explosion of higher education. While old timers might lament that the quality of graduates is not what it once was, the reality is that more and more people are highly educated and capable of evaluating ideas. This trend is not

¹⁴ Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

¹⁵ Denise Bradley and others, *Review of Australian Higher Education* (Canberra: DEEWR, 2008), 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

limited to some of the planets more privileged countries. In China the number of undergraduate and graduate enrolments quintupled between 1998–2005, and there is no sign of this slowing down.¹⁷ By its emphasis on higher education, China is pointing the way to the many countries who aspire for a better future for their population.

With increasingly well-educated congregations, preachers can no longer stand in pulpits “six feet above contradiction” and must expect their views to be challenged. This is especially true when they move to areas outside of their expertise. Are pastors the font of all wisdom on raising children when there are six psychologists and four social workers in the congregation? Views expressed from the pulpit will no longer be accepted uncritically.

In the light of this it is particularly disturbing that some denominations are downplaying the importance of a rigorous theological training for their pastors. While we undoubtedly need to review what is taught at seminary, it is clear that we need clergy who have a depth of biblical understanding and who are theologically insightful. This depth cannot be gained via attending the occasional inspirational seminar or conference. At a time when the training demands for all professions are increasing, it sends an awkward message to the community if we appear to think that our clergy need less training. Are we implying that we are propagating a faith with little substance and content, and that the only skills required in furthering it are those of being able to motivate the credulous?

Not that the seminary should only train potential clergy. With the democratization of knowledge, an increasing number of lay people long for a depth of understanding of the Christian faith that it is unrealistic to expect the local church to provide. We should welcome this development, and ensure that we have sufficiently flexible training pathways to allow for the participation of thoughtful laypeople in our programmes.

If we accept the need for thinking faith, we should ask to whom the seminary should speak.

*First, the seminary should do theology for and on behalf of the church.*¹⁸ We might need to overcome some suspicions here and will sometimes come across a “Jesus yes, theology no” mentality. Rather than lament this, those of us in the seminary need to be willing to work at finding the right tone for our communication, or put slightly differently, how to find our voice. At present the theologian’s voice is sometimes portrayed as a pedantic whine. The unspoken fear in many congregations is that what starts as a quibble will escalate into an unseemly brawl—with a church split not far off. Rather than discuss issues, we therefore often bury them. Only the lowest common denominator of completely non-controversial beliefs remains, and as a result we become used to never exploring anything in depth. It is only a small step from here to assuming that we never explore in depth because depth does not exist. The seminary can help reverse this trend by speaking respectfully of alternate views, by welcoming the richness of nuance, and by validating the

¹⁷ Yao Li and others, “China’s Higher Education Transformation and Its Global Implications,” *Vox* (2008): <http://www.voxeu.org/article/china-s-higher-education-transformation> accessed 2 Sept 2013.

¹⁸ This is why Grenz named his overview of theology *Theology for the Community of God*. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994).

importance of exploring new ideas. We need to do this in tones of humility. Let's remember that 2000 years of church history support the hypothesis that we might be wrong!

Second, the seminary should do theology for the market place. We live at a time of a hardening secularism. Most secularists will tolerate faith communities so long as they remain in their ghettos. It doesn't take much thought to realise that secular atheism is as much an ideology as is religious faith. It makes no sense to allow the one into the public arena while we banish the other to the religious cloister. If faith communities abandon their role in the public arena, this trend will continue to harden. It is only stating the obvious to note that if the seminary, which employs those who are the best educated in the insights of the Christian faith, says nothing about the major issues of our day, people will conclude that it is because the Christian faith has nothing to say.

For the seminary, the entry to the marketplace will often be via the academy. Rather than only speak at theological conferences, we should prepare ourselves to present papers at conferences on education, philosophy, business ethics, public policy... the list goes on and on. George Marsden speaks supportively and enthusiastically of "the outrageous idea of Christian scholarship" and we should be willing to support this quest.¹⁹ It should not be limited to conference participation. Why should theologians only teach theology students? Should we not raise our hands to teach courses in ethics, and philosophy or to participate in class debates about the care of the environment, the eradication of poverty and the appropriate use of wealth? Belief in the Christian God makes a significant difference to the way in which each of these subjects is handled, and if we do not make ourselves available to explore this difference, who will? As we contribute relevantly in this arena, it is only a matter of time until we will be invited to contribute in yet wider arenas. Why should the new atheists be the only ones who get a public hearing?

Embarking upon this journey will take courage. It involves transforming the seminary from a place of quiet reflection (and sometimes escape) to an active participant in the hurly burly of life. I love Philip Dick's words in *The Dark Haired Girl*. "I finally reduced all human virtues to one: BRAVERY. ... if you aren't brave, it doesn't matter what other virtues you have, because you aren't going to act them out. What good does it do to be able to see the truth if you're too [scared] to act on the basis of what you see."²⁰

Let me summarise. If we are to promote faithful thinking, the seminary must

- 1) Believe in the importance of an educated, thoughtful clergy. If we don't believe in what we do, or worse still, if we don't produce skilled, faithful thinkers, we will vote ourselves out of existence.
- 2) Create pathways for thinking laypeople to engage with the training provided by the seminary.
- 3) Work on the interface between the seminary and the church. The seminary should help the church deal with complex issues of faith and practice, and in doing so should model appropriate ways of dealing with difference and nuance.

¹⁹ George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Philip K. Dick, *The Dark Haired Girl* (Shingletown: Mark V. Ziesing, 1988).

- 4) Work on the interface between the seminary and the marketplace. The initial entry point will often be via the academy, but there is no reason why it should be limited to this arena. The goal should be active involvement in all of life.

Increasingly people dismiss the Christian faith as morally suspect and intellectually shallow. It is not enough for us to lament such lop sided caricatures. Those of us in the seminary are well placed to serve the church by promoting faithful thinking. Faithful thinking is usually a pre-condition of faithful living, so in birthing a thoughtful Christian faith, the seminary can help combat two of the great missiological stumbling blocks of our day. If we don't meet this challenge, who will?

Reviews

CHARLES PARTEE. *THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN*. LOUISVILLE: WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX PRESS, 2008. (XVII + 345 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0-664-23119-4]

MYK HABETS

CAREY BAPTIST COLLEGE

The Protestant Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) is one of the most influential figures in religious history. His life and theology have been scrutinized by generations and studies on his writings continue to flood the printing presses. And yet despite this, there is still an ill-informed caricature of Calvin by many Christians of an ill-tempered curmudgeon hell-bent on squashing all who dared think differently from him. Partee, Professor of Church History at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, is aware of these misconceptions and has written a book on Calvin's thought which goes some way to dispelling such notions. While Partee concentrates on the thought and theology of Calvin, in the process he makes direct and indirect comments about Calvin the man, the pastor, the husband, the father, and the Christian disciple.

This is a beautifully written book. Partee writes with the hand of a seasoned professional who knows what he is talking about. After lecturing and writing on Calvin for decades, Partee proves to be a sure guide through Calvin's *Institute*, Commentaries, letters, and tracts. Partee's aim in this book is twofold: to survey the full sweep of Calvin's theology, and to collect the benefits that accrue. As an historian Partee stays true to his discipline of historical theology and examines Calvin's thought in context, avoids anachronism, and deals fairly with his sources. The product is a lengthy study of Calvin's theology, especially of the *Institute*, and the wider theological and historical contexts within which such theology may be understood. Only on one occasion does Partee explicitly move from historical theology to contemporary theology; in a section on mysticism and deification (pp. 167–179). Taking up both themes, popular in current studies of Calvin, Partee shows how Calvin can, with some work, be characterised as a mystical theologian. However, when it comes to deification, Partee argues against all attempts to read Eastern Orthodox ideas out of Calvin's use of 'deification'. On p. 176, Partee even cites a Kiwi theologian who supports a reading of Calvin as advocate of a form of *theosis* and graciously disagrees with him. While Partee may have misunderstood said Kiwi, his excursions on mysticism and deification are a welcome and informative sidetrack.

Two strengths of Partee's study deserve specific mention. Partee successfully shows how one of Calvin's central theological ideas is that of union with Christ and yet this does not occupy an integrative motif or formal principle of correlation for Calvin or his supposed theological 'system'. Throughout each section of the *Institute* Partee successfully highlights how the theme of union with Christ is central to an understanding of each part of the whole. This allows Partee to make sense of Calvin's treatment of sanctification before justification, for instance. This is a welcome reading of Calvin and one which, in my opinion, is entirely correct. The second strength is related to the first and it is the place pneumatology plays

in Calvin's—the "theologian of the Spirit"—theology. As a distinctly Trinitarian theologian, Calvin's theology can only be fully understood when the mission and identity of the Holy Spirit is recognised. Through the four books of the *Institute* and in the various other tracts and treatises Calvin wrote, Partee keeps pneumatology in focus and in so-doing shows some of the deeper structures of his theological vision.

On the basis of these two commitments; union with Christ and pneumatology, Partee is able to highlight how Calvin's theology is profound, pastoral, and practical. To illustrate, Partee reminds the reader that Calvin does not call his *Institutes* a *summa theologiae* but a *summa pietatis*—meaning a comprehensive and systematic confession of the love of God the Father revealed in Jesus Christ the Eternal Son, and effected by the work of the Holy Spirit (p. 297). What this means in practice is that Calvin attempts to be faithful to Scripture more than faithful to philosophical logic. This does not mean Calvin's theology is incoherent or contradictory, it is extremely logical. What it does mean is that when a decision is to be made between two ideas, both biblical, which are seemingly hard to reconcile, Calvin will assert both and resist the temptation to delve deeper than faith will allow. This is evident in his affirmation of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the human person, for instance, or the eternal election of God to life and the 'accident' of reprobation. According to Partee, Calvin's theology "is not a rational synthesis, it is a theological confession of the truth which is revealed in Jesus Christ, informed by Scripture, guided by tradition, certified by experience, and elaborated by reason" (p. 330). Once again Partee's instincts ring true and Calvin's voice comes through clearly and, I think, accurately.

Partee's work is one of the best introductions to and overviews of Calvin's theology to date and will quickly establish itself on the essential reading list of any course on Calvin or Reformed theology around the world for some time to come. Move over Wendel, Partee has arrived! It is also a very enjoyable work with *bon mots* for all. Enjoy.

NANCY LEE, *LYRICS OF LAMENT: FROM TRAGEDY TO TRANSFORMATION*.
MINNEAPOLIS: FORTRESS PRESS, 2010. (XII +196 PP). [ISBN: 978-0-800-66301-8]

MIRIAM BIER
LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Nancy Lee's *Lyrics of Lament: From Tragedy to Transformation* is a timely reminder of the power and promise of lament across time, geography, faith, and culture. From Ancient Mesopotamian city laments, to laments for New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Lee gathers a vast spectrum of lament literature and demonstrates its unique ability to give voice to human pain and suffering in all its specificity and universality.

Chapter one introduces a variety of laments from various times and cultures, all of which have in common the understanding that a particular deity is behind the lamentable events. In this chapter Lee posits the role of women in composing and performing dirges and notes the continuing tradition of women

lamenters/protesters in many cultures. Lee also observes the power that a lament for a hero figure can have in inspiring the followers of a political or reform movement. She further comments on the difficulty of lamenting for so many after the Shoah. In this chapter Lee identifies two major literary forms, that of the dirge and the lament prayer, that she maintains are common across religions and cultures. The chapter thus exposes the reader to some different types of lament and make some interesting comments upon them, but otherwise there's not a lot keeping the chapter hanging together.

Chapter two identifies features of lament and explores the difference between dirge and lament prayer. After Jahnou, Lee identifies the elements of the dirge as: death, and possibly cause of death; complaint about that death; weeping; accusation; call for vengeance/justice/a curse; call and response elements; address to the dead; questions; a summons to mourn; mourning of the incomprehensibility of the loss; the impact of the death on survivors; a reconciling motif; praise for the deceased; maybe a prayer to God (p. 52). Further features include personification (of city, nature, war, and death) (pp. 56–61), and contrast between then and now (pp. 61–65). Following Westermann, Lee's explanation of the defining features of lament prayer is much less comprehensive, comprising simply the "expression of suffering or need, and the plea to the deity for help" (p. 65).

Chapter three grounds lament tradition firmly in the Hebrew Bible. Lee explores two major paradigmatic narratives where someone laments and God answers, in order to demonstrate the precedent for the efficacy of lament. Abel's blood crying from the ground; and the Israelite people in Egypt. According to Lee, "The Exodus liberation narrative and the lament psalms in the Tanak/Hebrew Bible/Old Testament provide the primary theological paradigm for lament genres" (p. 73).

Chapter four purports to examine the lament in the three Abrahamic traditions, and includes selections from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Koran. This chapter also contains a wealth of additional lament literature from other sources, particularly blues/jazz music and South African poetry, upon which Lee comments at length. This is curious, given the stated intention to focus on sacred literature in this chapter. Lee casts the net wide; perhaps, at times, a little too wide, including literature that others might not easily identify as lament. It may be simply that I am not familiar with the Koran, but I found Lee's defence of selected passages as lament literature for the most part unconvincing. For example, she quotes Sura 14:39: "Praise be to Allah, Who hath granted unto me in old age Isma'il and Isaac: for truly my Lord is He, the Hearer of Prayer!" (p. 129). Lee earlier identified the key features of lament prayer as expression of suffering and plea for help, neither of which I find evident here (unless any prayer can be considered a plea for help of sorts!) While other passages she cites do clearly contain lament elements, it would have been helpful had Lee included some further explanations of how they demonstrate the elements of dirge or lament prayer she has previously outlined. As it is, her listing of various passages without including much in the way of context is not, for me, entirely satisfying.

Chapter five sets out to create links between lament, prophetic voices, and social justice. This chapter draws on Lee's previous work on voicing of lament in Jeremiah and in Lamentations (Nancy C. Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations* [Leiden: Brill, 2002], where, it should be noted, Lee flows against the tide of scholarly

consensus by suggesting a return to the traditional ascription of (at least some of) Lamentations to Jeremiah). Lee argues on the basis of her selection of lament literature from Jeremiah and from contemporary resistance movements that lament literature is associated with prophetic individuals.

Chapter six highlights the role of lament in mourning an entire community of people, and again includes examples, both ancient and contemporary. Again, this chapter is a little fragmented, being as it is, mostly comprised of selections of lament literature without much in the way of comment to segue between them. However, the literature she has selected for the most part speaks for itself; and eloquently so.

Chapter seven explores the very real issue of the call for violent vengeance that appears in so much lament literature. Here Lee's political agenda comes to the fore. She argues that traditional lament forms must be innovated such that they protest violence and instead work towards peace in the world, seeking what she calls "higher spiritual principles." She calls for "Renaissance and People's movements" in reclaiming and revising lament forms to create new, nonviolent laments. The crucial part of this process for Lee is the involvement of individuals-in-community in creating and performing their own laments.

Chapter eight finishes the book with the twin realisations that children are often the greatest victims of disparity and violence in the world; and yet it is often children and youth who call for and lead movements for change. Thus while there is clearly cause for lament in the world, there is also, in Lee's final analysis, cause for hope.

One of the great gifts of this book is in the scope and breadth of lament literature Lee has collected, with selections of laments from ancient Mesopotamia right through to laments in contemporary culture. Lee's work draws on the best of scholarship but is still very accessible, not least because the text is interspersed with so many examples of lament songs and poems. These laments are often truncated, which leaves the reader wanting more. The website supplementing the book goes some way towards alleviating this, with links to full versions, readings, and performances of many of the laments Lee cites (www.fortresspress.com/lee).

Lee states from the outset that she wishes the laments gathered here to speak for themselves; and they do, eloquently, in a veritable cacophony of voices. However, perhaps because of the wide variety and scope of laments she has collected, the book seems at times fragmentary, moving from one expression of lament to another with little in the way of explanation as to how the juxtaposed pieces hang together. This is perhaps because the work is neither a simple anthology of lament literature; nor a sustained academic study of lament literature, but falls somewhere in between. While making it accessible to a wide audience, this leaves the academic reader wanting a little more in terms of engagement; and the interested reader looking for expressions of lament wanting a little more in terms of completeness of each work cited. However, the variety and universality of the selection makes this book in itself a wonderful resource for those interested in exploring ways of expressing human suffering and pain that is common to us all.

Lyrics of lament, as the title and content would suggest, is not a cheerful read. It is at times relentless. And yet there is profound hope, hope that lament might change the world.

Lee's book is political. It is not a call to arms, but a call to lay down arms—a call to nonviolent resistance of injustice through the use and innovation of the lament tradition. Lament, for Lee, is at once an expression of sorrow and a vehicle of protest, and she seeks change in political structures by the voicing of lament by people seeking justice in the world. Lee maintains that the innovation of lament by people utilising and recreating the lament traditions might promote lasting change toward peace in the world. This is, perhaps, an ambitious political agenda; but it is a worthy one. And when reading the collection of laments that have arisen from and seeded into movements for change it's hard not to wonder if there might be something in it.

This is a book to be dipped into time and time again. Its expressions of grief and lament resonate with all who share humanity. These laments in turn may inspire both our own expressions of grief, and solidarity with those whose mourn, gentling God's people to action in a hurting world.

ALAN G. PADGETT AND STEVE WILKENS. *CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN THOUGHT: A HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHERS, IDEAS AND MOVEMENTS. VOLUME 3: JOURNEY TO POSTMODERNITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY*. DOWNERS GROVE: IVP ACADEMIC, 2009. (PP. 388) [ISBN: 978-1-84474-388-9]

MYK HABETS

CAREY BAPTIST COLLEGE

This is the third and final volume in the series *Christianity and Western Thought* and continues in the tradition established in the first two volumes. The three volumes have appeared in 10 year intervals and as such have taken much longer to complete than the publishers originally intended. The series was initiated by Colin Brown, professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and he was scheduled to complete all three volumes. However, his work load and age meant he could not complete the project beyond the first volume, so Padgett and Wilkens stepped in to complete volumes 2 and 3. Together, this three volume set establishes itself as one of a number of extremely helpful overviews of key philosophers, philosophies, and cultural ideas from a broadly evangelical Christian worldview. More than simply a summary of Western philosophy, each volume offers critical interaction and insightful perspectives on the range of topics covered. Volumes 2 and 3 are more limited in their scope than volume 1, and as such diverge somewhat from the original intent. This is not a critical comment, however, merely an observation. By limiting the scope of the final 2 volumes the authors are able to develop ideas with more rigour and provide more extensive interaction with the themes. Volume 1 surveys the ancient world to the Age of Enlightenment; volume 2 examines faith and reason in the 19th century; while volume 3 offers a broad sweep of 20th century philosophical thought from the demise of idealism to the establishment of postmodernism.

Written in a narrative style the 10 chapters of volume 3 are eminently readable for the non-specialist and open up the themes and personalities involved in critical but honest detail. Chapter one examines the

demise of idealism; chapter 2 the rise of analytic philosophy; chapter 3 pays close consideration to Heidegger and German existentialism; and chapter 4 moves onto French existentialism. Chapter 5 is one of the only chapters in the book to look directly at theological concerns as it turns its attention to existence and the Word of God in dialectical theology and neo-orthodoxy. The next four chapters examine pragmatism and process philosophies on the rise in America; further developments in analytic philosophy; issues surrounding Christian philosophy; and finally the journey to postmodernism. A final chapter offers a retrospect and reflection.

I have found these volumes extremely reliable and useful guides over a number of years. Throughout each volume, including this one, the authors offer their own critical judgements on the philosophies they are canvassing, and each time they do it is sage advice. To illustrate, in chapter 2 Bertrand Russell's early analytic philosophy is analysed and then assessed. The authors spend time dealing with Russell's objections to Christianity—the ethical, biblical, and philosophical—before offering a reply. Russell's Cartesian approach to epistemology is examined and found wanting as Padgett and Wilkens suggest that the existence of God can be understood, after Alvin Plantinga, as “properly basic” (p. 50). Further, Russell's arguments are weak as he “too easily dismisses views that he doesn't like, without bothering to examine sophisticated, scholarly versions of the arguments” (p. 51). A series of such arguments follows. While Christians have often been guilty of adopting the same approach as Russell in this regard, Wilkens and Padgett offer an exemplary alternative throughout this volume.

Chapter 5 deserves special mention, “Existence and the Word of God: Dialectical and Neo-Orthodoxy” (pp. 131-183). My undergraduate education was dominated by critical North American interpretations of Barth and what was then pejoratively called “neo-orthodoxy.” Treating neo-orthodoxy and the theologies of Bultmann, Barth, and Brunner (R. Niebuhr and Paul Tillich are also included in chapter 5) as all of one piece, the interpretation was always hostile and, it turns out, often inaccurate. So this chapter, written by two North American scholars who are not Barthian, piqued my interest. I am glad to report that their analysis of what was called neo-orthodoxy is fair and even-handed and matches the quality of the rest of the volume. Acknowledging the fact that “neo-orthodoxy” is a pejorative label applied by critics; they quite rightly identify the theology of Karl Barth and others of the period as “dialectical theology.” Dialectical theology has certain general defining features: it stresses the transcendence of God as the Wholly Other; its theology accommodates what appears to be paradox within Scripture; it holds to revelation as an event; is a protest against rationalistic religion in any of its manifest forms; uses an existential method; and has a renewed emphasis on human sinfulness (pp. 132-133). In their evaluation of Barth's theology in particular, the question of universalism appears, as would be expected; along with the distinction Barth maintained between the Word of God written and the Word of God, thus Barth did not equate Scripture strictly with divine revelation; the christologically conditioned nature of all of his theology; and his reimagining of the doctrine of election. To each of these issues the authors offer critique while establishing the context out of which Barth wrote.

Christianity and Western Thought deserves to be in the library of every theology lecturer and on the shelves of good church libraries. As key thinkers of Western thinking are interacted with at high schools

and universities, and as their influence is felt in daily life, this series offers a serious yet readable map to navigate one's way through the complexities of the arguments and keep a solid, evangelical, Christian worldview in focus. I for one am exceedingly glad the series has been completed and completed so well.

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG AND SUNG WOOK CHUNG, EDS. *A CASE FOR HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM: AN ALTERNATIVE TO 'LEFT BEHIND' ESCHATOLOGY*. GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER, 2009. (XIX + 184 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0-8010-3596-8]

MYK HABETS

CAREY BAPTIST COLLEGE

Dispensational versions of eschatology have dominated evangelical theology for the last 100 years, especially in North America. The most common expression of such eschatology is the hugely popular sixteen volumes of the *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (1995–2007), which sold millions of copies worldwide, and the earlier best seller of Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). This version of eschatology offers a complicated and detailed timeline of future events, central to which is the secret pre-tribulation rapture of the church, the great tribulation, the rise of two individuals—the false prophet and the anti-Christ—the restoration of ethnic/national Israel, followed by the return of Christ to the earth to rule for a millennium, the last battle, the final judgments (of nations, individuals, Israel, and Gentiles), and the ushering in of the New Heavens and New Earth. For many Baptists this version of eschatology is the only one they could narrate. However, surprising it is to many, this is not the dominant understanding of eschatology in church history, or today.

Most Christian academics working today broadly fall into the amillennial category (a few are postmillennial); arguing that the promises to Israel are now spiritual in nature and are enfolded into the promises for the church. There is no literal tribulation, false prophet, anti-Christ, or millennium to come. For those who don't accept this argument on Scriptural grounds, there is a third option—historical premillennialism. Historic premillennialists see a future for Israel, a literal second coming of Christ to the earth for a golden age (1000 years or not), and then the creation of the new heavens and new earth. In addition, this position argues that historic premillennialism was the dominant position of the early church and of the Church Fathers and thus it has an eminent orthodox pedigree. It is this position the contributors to the present volume support, articulate, and seek to popularise. Most of the chapters of this volume were presented at a Denver Seminary conference on the theme and edited for this volume. Six of the contributors are Denver Seminary faculty and are historic premillennialists, the other two come from a South American Dispensationalist and a patristics scholar respectively. The volume does not seek to present a holistic or systematic exposition of historic premillennialism; rather, it offers perspectival reflections on aspects of this eschatology, something common to conference papers.

Four chapters address historical type issues. Timothy Weber critically reflects on the rise of Dispensational premillennialism and the demise of historic premillennialism until the work of George Eldon

Ladd writing in the 1950s (chapter 1). Weber shows how Dispensationalism is a populist eschatology while historical premillennialism is an elitist eschatology. By this he means that Dispensationalism appeals to the masses while other eschatology's appeal to academics. Hélène Dallaire makes Jewish eschatology; with its debates on messianism, Jewish apocalypticism, immortality, resurrection, divine retribution, the end of days, paradise, the and the netherworld; as the theme of her essay (chapter 3). She concludes that there is no one view of eschatology within Jewish literature, biblical and extra-biblical. Jewish theology thus does not rule in or out the conception of a millennium.

In another historical chapter, Donald Fairbairn canvasses the patristic period (AD 100–600) views on the millennium, taking note of exegetical, theological, historical, and cultural influences at play (chapter 6). Fairbairn's essay achieves three stated goals, 1) to address the question of whether premillennialism was the consensus of the early church, 2) to resolve what kind of premillennialism was found in this period, and 3) to examine the way premillennialism functioned in the theology of the early church. As to the first question, Fairbairn's analysis shows that the first two centuries were dominated by a chiliasm, when the issue was raised at all, until Origin's critique of it in the mid-third century, when it declined in the East. It persisted in the West at least until the early fifth-century when it lost favour due to Augustine's rejection of it. As for the second question, Fairbairn convincingly shows that a dispensational pretribulationism was foreign to the thinking of the early church; "Every reference that betrays any idea of a relationship between the tribulation and the return of Christ suggests that he return follows the tribulation" (p. 128). As to the third question, Fairbairn highlights how teaching on the millennium has to do with the unity of Scripture, the unity of God's purposes, and the ultimately the unity and goodness of the God we worship. Fairbairn also offers a poignant observation that in letting go of eschatology, the church today has still not quite gotten rid of Gnosticism, "the greatest battle the church has ever faced" (p. 131). Take that all 'panmillennialists'! The final chapter by Oscar Campos is a reflection on South American dispensational premillennialism's impact on missiology (chapter 8). Campos provides a good account of the shortfalls of dispensational missiology as being non-holistic and individualistic. In its place a sort of "contextual evangelicalism" rose up, with a helpful emphasis on "holistic mission" and social responsibility. While an interesting chapter in its own right it seemed out of place in this collection and added little to the work as a cohesive whole.

There are two chapters explicitly devoted to biblical studies. Richard Hess surveys Old Testament passages (chapter 2) and finds a basis for a historical premillennialism there. According to Hess, a straightforward reading of the Old Testament demands a more-or-less literal hermeneutic (a realistic hermeneutic) in which a literal Temple, literal spatio-temporal time period (the millennium), and a literal future for literal Israel is demanded. This is not the wooden literalism of dispensationalism, but also not the spiritualizing hermeneutics of amillennialism. New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg refutes outright the pretribulationist view of dispensationalism, and instead offers a New Testament reading for posttribulationism, something central to historical premillennialism (chapter 4). In his unusual and judicious way Blomberg analysis the pretribulationist view before deconstructing it and offering a posttribulationist, premillennial alternative. The crux of Blomberg's argument is that "no matter how many flashbacks or

disruptions of chronological sequence one might want to argue for elsewhere in Revelation, it makes absolutely no sense to put one in between Revelation 19 and 20 as both amillennialists and postmillennialists must do” (p. 67). This is one of the best essays in the collection as it stays on theme, deals with primary texts, and makes a convincing case.

Two further chapters deal with issues of systematic theology. Theologian Don Payne offers an insightful essay on the theological method of premillennialism, and in the process offers something of an introduction on how to think theologically (chapter 5). Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience), Payne analyses the sources of premillennial theology, astutely working his way through each one with well chosen select evidence. Payne then offers implications on these sources of theology before offering insightful reflections on how and why dispensationalism has used popular Christianity and low-church methods to populate its message—with huge success. Sung Wook Chung offers a focussed and forthright chapter challenging Reformed theology over its almost exclusive rejection of anything but an amillennial view of eschatology (chapter 7). According to Chung, a Reformed amillennial interpretation of Rev 20:1–6 is seriously problematic within the theological contours of covenant theology. The central argument Chung makes is that “by overly focussing on the covenant of works in Genesis 2:15–17, Reformed covenant theology has not correctly understood the significance of Genesis 1:26–28 for the reality of God’s kingdom in general and the millennial rule of Jesus Christ in particular” (p. 135). Chung’s reappraisal of Reformed theology is a clear and compelling one which will arouse much interest amongst the Reformed community. It is, I believe, a proposal well worth considering.

A Case for Historical Premillennialism is a much needed and interesting work, with a number of very useful essays. It does, however, have some drawbacks. With only two chapters dedicated to biblical themes many will feel that this is too light and more close readings of Scripture were required to really make a “case” for this eschatology. With most of the essayists coming from Denver Seminary there was also a narrowness to the volume which could, unfortunately, give the impression that this eschatology is more of a niche theology and not, as is the case, a broadly received position. The volume also lacked several more well researched essays of a theological and pastoral nature, in order to more clearly highlight the implications of the position and how it fits with other biblical, theological, and pastoral-missional commitments. In short, many will appreciate this book but want more. If this volume is a primer or stimulus for more works from this position then this will have been a worthwhile venture to offer the Christian public.

CHRISTOPHER J.H. WRIGHT, ED. *JOHN STOTT: A PORTRAIT BY HIS FRIENDS*. NOTTINGHAM: IVP, 2011. (217 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-84474-516-6]

PAUL WINDSOR

LANGHAM PREACHING

With John Stott's "incredible capacity for friendship" (p. 13) in mind, this book is a collection of reflections from 35 friends from the different eras and time zones in which his life was lived. While this sounds like a recipe for unadulterated adulation, this is not the impression created in the reader. With both text and photo this compilation uncovers an honesty, humour, and humanity in the life of John Stott which the longer (by Timothy Dudley-Smith) and shorter (by Roger Steer) biographies did not achieve as readily.

As a way to nurture the honesty it was Stott's desire that it be a "warts and all" story which he had no interest in reading before publication. This honesty emerges, for example, in the chapter by Myra Chave-Jones where the younger Stott is described as an inhibited person, known to become angry, and "not always a good judge of character" (p. 36). The book is littered with a mixture of humorous Stottian quips ("Flattery is like smoking—it is OK, if you don't inhale") and stories. And the humanity is evident as well. For many, Stott remains "the most Christ-like person they have ever met"—but his obsession with Christ was mixed with lesser obsessions with birds, chocolate, the writer Saki—with even a penchant for James Bond movies added into the mix.

The book works well because we are engaging with the people who knew him best who themselves are trying to capture the essence of their friend in a few paragraphs. And so the insightful, helpful descriptions proliferate: "the gracious, perceptive leader" (Michael Green); the "compelling seriousness" (Frances Whitehead); the manner in which John Stott and Billy Graham were "weaving together a worldwide network of truth and trust among Bible believers everywhere" (Richard Bewes); that enigmatic "blend of passion and balance, humility and authority, scholarship and simplicity, austerity and warmth" (David Turner); listeners being "held in thoughtful wonder as John Stott illumined the text" (Keith & Gladys Hunt); "the clarity, forcefulness and pastoral wealth of his words" (Samuel Escobar); "a veritable modern-day church father" (Peter Kuzmic); "a drive for clarity, a confidence in rationality, an expectation of competency" (Mark Labberton).

The freshest contributions to my understanding of John Stott came in the chapters from David Turner (a judge), Peter Harris (the founder of A Rocha) and Mark Labberton (a study-assistant who is now the Preaching lecturer at Fuller Seminary). The most memorable story came from Ajith Fernando where he discovers that his heavily annotated copy of *The Cross of Christ* has fallen out the window of a Sri Lankan bus. He stops the bus so that he can go in search of his copy of "the most enriching doctrinal book I have ever read" (p. 107).

As I read my mind wandered and the questions multiplied. Wouldn't it have been great to have a chapter from Billy Graham and I wonder when his trajectory of ill-health will see him join his friend in

heaven? Why did the church in New Zealand need to be so inhospitable to John Stott, with his last visit to our shores being *forty* years ago? It shows up in the paucity of our traditions of saintly scholarship, authoritative and relevant biblical exposition, and the best in a clear, yet spacious, evangelicalism. And what about those 250 young adults in church the other night? When asked for “a show of hands” on how many had heard of John Stott, a generous estimate was that three people raised their hands. While the reasons can be offered, it was still a sad sight ... and this “portrait by his friends” would serve well as a place where this new antipodean generation might meet the most influential leader in the worldwide evangelical church for a generation or three.

Towards the end of the book is recorded Stott’s response to the doctor when asked for an explanation of his wishes should he become incapacitated or unconscious. He does so before concluding with: “... the reason that I do not wish to cling to life is that I have a living hope of a yet more glorious life beyond death, and I do not wish to be unnecessarily hindered from inheriting it” (p. 211). In God’s goodness, he did inherit it. As with his sermons, so also in his death can there be found clarity and symmetry for the year within the decade and the date within the month are the same: John Stott, 27 April 1921–27 July 2011.

While John Stott has been my hero and my inspiration throughout my working life, it is also true, as Chris Wright expresses it, that “the key thing is not to try to imitate him, but to imitate the Christ who so demonstrably lived within him” (p. 216). He lived for Christ and his greater glory and our response should be “above all, to cling to the cross” (p. 198).

ANALYTIC THEOLOGY: NEW ESSAYS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THEOLOGY. EDITED BY OLIVER D. CRISP AND MICHAEL C. REA. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009. (316 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0-19-920356-7]

BOBBY GROW

VANCOUVER

The editors of *Analytic Theology*, Oliver D. Crisp, formerly reader in theology at the University of Bristol and now at Fuller Theological Seminary; and Michael C. Rea, professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, have brought together a prestigious cast of philosopher-theologians to engage an issue of Christian theology that has become, for many, a beach-head too foreboding to breach; *viz.* the interdisciplinary relation between so called ‘Analytic Theologians’ and ‘Continental’ and/or ‘Dialectic Theologians.’ On this relation, Rea writes in his introduction to the volume:

The methodological divide between systematic theologians and analytic philosophers of religion is ripe for exploration. It is of obvious theoretical importance to both disciplines, but it also has practical import. The climate in theology departments for analytic theologians is muck like the climate in English-speaking philosophy departments for continental philosophers: often chilly. Moreover, the methodological divide is surely the most significant obstacle to fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue. The problem isn’t just that academics with different methodological perspectives have trouble conversing with one another. Rather, it is that, by and large, the established figures in both disciplines don’t even view mutual conversation as worth pursuing. They ignore one another. They (implicitly or explicitly)

encourage their students to ignore one another. They allow their methodological preferences to play a very large role in their judgments about hiring and about the quality of papers they referee for professional journals. And the divide only grows deeper. No doubt many (on both sides) will think that all of this is perfectly legitimate. Maybe it is, but that is beside the point; its legitimacy shouldn't just be taken for granted. It is an open and interesting question whether theology can sensibly be done in the analytic mode. (p. 2.)

The rest of the volume, from one degree to another; seeks to provide some points of constructive contact between Rea's 'systematic theologian' (which I label above 'dialectic theologian') and his 'analytic theologian'.

This volume is segregated into four sections; the section breakdown is as follows. *I. In Defense of Analytic Theology*, which is made up of three chapters. Chapter 1 is written by Crisp and is entitled: *On Analytic Theology*; Chapter 2 is penned by William J. Abraham, named: *Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology*; and Chapter 3 is inked by Randal Rauser, and his chapter is presented as: *Theology as a Bull Session*. Rea writes of these three chapters, "The first three chapters are aimed explicitly at the defense of analytic theology" (p. 26). Crisp and Abraham have similar aims in their respective approaches; they both seek to dispel either, the misconceptions (the negative side, and the burden of Crisp's chapter p. 33) that have accrued around the language of 'analytic theology', and/or they seek to provide a positive conception of what in fact analytic theology offers the broader enterprise of theological articulation for the Christian church (this is Abraham's more 'positive' offering). Rea observes, "On Crisp's view, concerns about analytic theology are likely to arise out of misconceptions about its commitments...Much of his chapter is devoted to dispelling these misconceptions" (p. 26). Rea notes further, in regards to Abraham's chapter: "Abraham also addresses objections against analytic theology, but more of his contribution is devoted to exploring what analytic theology might actually look like" (p. 26). Randal Rauser's chapter serves to be a little more provocative and polemical to finish this section off; he offers a critique of Sallie McFague's "persuasive metaphor" model of theology, and Jürgen Moltmann's "perpetual conversation" model (*pace* Rea, p. 26)—Rauser penetrates and seeks to deconstruct these models of theological discourse through engaging the concept of *bullshit* (see the provocative section pp. 70–84).

The next section of the book is titled: *II. Historical Perspectives*, and it unfolds in this way. Chapter 4, entitled *A Conception of Faith in the Greek Fathers* is authored by John Lamont; Chapter 5 is intriguingly named *'As Kant has Shown ...' Analytic Theology and the Critical Philosophy*; Chapter 6 comes with the title *Schleiermacher's Theological Anti-Realism*, this chapter is given life by Andrew Dole; and last in this section, Chapter 7 is titled *How Philosophical Theology Became Possible within the Analytic Tradition*, which took its form through the pen of Nicholas Wolterstorff. Lamont's chapter offers a genealogy of how the concept of testimony took form as the basic belief through which Christian reflection has taken shape through the centuries. Rea underscores, "... Lamont does not discuss analytic theology directly..." (p. 27), instead, as Rea continues, "Lamont is identifying a view of faith and theological reflection that rejects the traditional rationalist/empiricist dichotomy...and yet leaves substantive knowledge of God by way of reason" (p. 27). The next two chapters, from Chignell and Dole, both seek to recast Kant (*pace* Chignell) and Schleiermacher (*pace* Dole) in ways that make both of these figures more open to the analytic theological tradition than heretofore most would

conceive of as a viable consideration. Rea notes, “The next two chapters, by Andrew Chignell and Andrew Dole, focus on a pair of figures who might well be thought to be driving forces behind a great deal of contemporary opposition to analytic theology: Kant and Schleiermacher” (p. 27). The last chapter, which closes this section, is Wolterstorff’s; he offers a shorter chapter which seeks to correct the misconceptions of what has come to be known as analytic theology throughout her variegated history. His chapter is a fitting close to this section as it synthesizes the preceding historical reflection, and segues the reader, most naturally into the next more constructive section. To which this review now turns.

Section three of the volume is entitled: *III. On The Data For Theology: Scripture, Reason, And Experience*. The lineaments of the section come to the reader in this shape: Chapter 8 is named *On Understanding Scripture as the Word of God* by Thomas McCall; Chapter 9 is titled *On Believing that the Scriptures are Divinely Inspired* by Thomas M. Crisp; Chapter 10 is *The Contribution of Religious Experience to Dogmatic Theology* by Michael Sudduth; and the closing chapter for this section is called *Science and Religion in Constructive Engagement* by Michael J. Murray. McCall, in his chapter, takes up the challenge of constructively engaging Karl Barth’s ontology of scripture and theory of revelation. He argues that the theological exegete can appropriate Barth’s unique conception of revelation, and at the same time continue to hold to the classic analytic mode of theological discourse. McCall writes: “I seek to show how Barth’s own concerns might be addressed by the use of analytic tools. Making use of recent developments in analytical philosophy of language, I argue throughout that the theologian who shares Barth’s fundamental theological commitments can—and indeed should—hold to the classical view” (p. 172). Crisp’s and Sudduth’s chapters, respectively, both argue, in their own ways, how it is that components other than reason and empirical datum can serve to ground rational inquiry; note Rea,

Thomas Crisp and Michael Sudduth...explore the ways in which sources other than reason and sense perception function in the formulation and rational grounding of important theological beliefs...Sudduth argues that religious experience plays a vital role in *natural* theology...and Crisp argues against the idea that natural theology warrants belief in the inspiration of scripture. Together, these two chapters help to provide a corrective to the idea that analytic theology is wedded to an overly optimistic view about the power of pure reason to provide grounds for theological beliefs (p. 28).

Crisp resources a kind of calculus for his argument; this reviewer found his offering to be quite intriguing, to say the least. And the last chapter for the section is provided by Murray; his offering is what some analytic theologians/philosophers (like J. P. Moreland and/or William Lane Craig) have called *complimentarianism* (although Murray himself does not use this nomenclature). This is the procedure that engages in methodology that looks to place the various disciplines in cordial, if not mutually informing conversation. For this reviewer, Murray offers one of the better illustrations of how in fact analytic theology operates as an interdisciplinary movement. Rea muses on Murray’s chapter in this way: “Theology and science might thus be seen (by religious believers, at least) as working cooperatively toward a unified explanatory theory. Here too, then, we find a model for understanding theology that retains analytic ambitions without either embracing an objectionable rationalism or forcing theology somehow to accommodate the strictures of empiricism” (p. 29).

To close the volume, we enter section four; entitled: *IV. Analytic Approaches Reconsidered*. The line-up for this section is made up of three chapters: Chapter 12 named *The Problem of Evil: Analytic Philosophy and Narrative* by Eleonore Stump; Chapter 13 titled *Hermeneutics and Holiness* by Merold Westphal; and Chapter 14, and the last chapter of the book is called *Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Ávila* by Sarah Coakley (quite the title to end the volume). Eleonore Stump offers an interesting proposal which helps provide some corrective to what she calls *hemianopia* (p. 253), or the problem of being too narrowly left brained focus. She believes that this has presented analytic theology with a *lacuna*, leading to the neglect, for analytic theologians, of engaging narrative literature as a resource for theological discourse. Westphal's chapter, as Rea underscores, "... will think of the primary theological task as one of interpretation, and as one whose goal isn't so much theoretical understanding as practical wisdom—right living or, as Westphal puts it, holiness" (p. 29). So Westphal's approach is to move analytic theology beyond its usual playground, which is to consider theoretical understandings; and to move it into the arena of concrete, lived, sanctified understanding, as that is related to the theological task. In conclusion Coakley offers a way forward for both the analytic theologian and the systematic (or my 'dialectic') theologian by lifting up Teresa of Ávila as an exemplar of someone who provides a more feminine source for the theological task. Coakley's proposal leaves the door open for either the analytic theologian or the dialectic theologian to speak up first; this seems to be a laudable way to end a volume whose aim was to start a dialogue between theologians who rarely will speak with each other, except maybe in the faculty lounge.

Here I offer a few points of reflection. First, the editors of this volume are to be commended for offering a volume that has been structured in a coherent fashion; for assembling a cadre of preeminent scholars in their field; and for seeing the need for this schism to be addressed in a way that, for this reviewer, was done in a collegial and respectful way. Second, each of the chapters offered in the volume are resources in themselves as independent pieces of work that could stand alone; but the genius of the editors has been exemplified by ordering these essays in a way that they organically build upon each other so as to provide the reader with a healthy dose of synthetic thought in regards to the issue at hand; *viz.* understanding the contribution that so called analytic theology has to offer the broader theological task. Third, and this dovetails with the last point, this volume will introduce the uninitiated into the analytic waters in a way that should keep them open to the alternative side of this theological coin which this book has sought to achieve; in other words, this review believes that if the goal for this volume was to open doors for dialogical interaction to ensue between the analytic theologian and the dialectic/continental theologian, then this reviewer believes the editors have met that goal.

With the above said; here I offer a bit of critique. Since I am of the alternative mood (to the analytic tradition), it is this reviewer's belief that while this volume might foster dialogue amongst theologians in general; unfortunately, this book (with all of its strengths noted) will probably only reinforce the continued schism between the analytic and dialectic theologian. What this book does well, also will illustrate for the dialectic theologian that their misgivings about analytic theological methodology is justified; and thus this reviewer fears that a volume like this, ultimately, could lead to a further entrenchment of either side.

With all of the above considered I still highly recommend this volume to all of those who are interested in what has become an unfortunate impasse amongst theologians. The intended audience, I would suggest, for this volume will be the scholar, theologian, and specialist; it might serve some remedial force for the non-specialist, but this book is mostly for the academic, and maybe for an advanced graduate course on the topic.

KEVIN J. BIDWELL, *THE CHURCH AS THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MIROSLAV VOLFF'S ECCLESIAL MODEL*. EUGENE, OR.: WIPF & STOCK, 2011. (270 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-61077-373-1]

GREG LISTON
AUCKLAND

Bidwell's aim in this volume is to summarise, analyse, and evaluate the influential work *After Our Likeness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) in which Volf provides a theological defence of Free Church ecclesiology through analogy with a social understanding of the Trinity. Bidwell is highly critical of Volf's proposal, and for the most part justifies his negative evaluation. Beyond a direct critique of the explicit text of Volf's volume, he helpfully examines the sources that Volf relies on in constructing his proposal (predominantly Moltmann although others are considered), and also analyses the work of Volf's dialogue partners to see whether or not Volf's understanding and critique of them is accurate and justified (focusing on Ratzinger and Zizioulas' alternative ecclesial proposals, and John Smyth's ecclesiology as the *voice* of the free church tradition).

In terms of sources, Bidwell correctly recognises that Volf unquestioningly adopts Moltmann's non-hierarchical social Trinitarian model. He argues further that this understanding departs significantly from both Western and Eastern understandings of the Trinity, and moreover is out of step with the Biblical text, the historic creeds and the Church Fathers. His analysis of Volf's use of biblical and patristic sources is particularly damning. From a biblical perspective, Bidwell claims that Volf (and Free Church ecclesiologies in general) place more weight on Matt 18:20 than is exegetically warranted, and argues that there are more viable alternatives than interpreting 1 Cor 11–14 in particular and the early Corinthian church in general as evidencing a "congregational model" (pp. 218–28). Even more compellingly, Bidwell notes several places where Volf has utilised patristic sources to argue for positions that are clearly contrary to their authorial intent. In one telling example, Volf quotes Ignatius' *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, "wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church," to support his contention that the presence of Jesus Christ alone constitutes the church (p. 179). The sentence before and after his chosen quote, however, have Ignatius arguing that the role of the bishop is also constitutionally mandatory (pp.179–80). Overall Bidwell remains concerned that Volf adopts a "pick and choose" approach to Scripture and tradition where he emphasises those portions with which he strongly agrees (e.g. Gal 3:28) and (sometimes explicitly) dismisses and neglects those which don't immediately support his egalitarian understanding (p. 54).

In terms of dialogue partners, Bidwell argues that Volf's analysis and understanding is often mistaken. Bidwell suggests that Ratzinger's ecclesiology is primarily christologically determined, as opposed to Volf's argument that it mainly depends on a Trinitarian framework that emphasises the one divine substance over the three *hypostases*. Bidwell recognises that there are significant points of overlap between Zizioulas and Volf, particularly in that Zizioulas explicitly acknowledges the church as an image of the Trinity, but he also claims that Volf has failed to understand and address the universal aspects of Zizioulas' ecclesiology, and consequently Volf mistakenly focuses his framework almost exclusively onto the local church. For Smyth, Bidwell claims that Volf's failure to acknowledge the evolving context in which this church reformer was writing, and the consequent evolution in Smyth's thinking, reduces the value of Volf's references of his work to mere proof texting. Bidwell's overall argument in these chapters is that Volf is excessively motivated by his supposition of an egalitarian and non-hierarchical Trinity and ecclesiology. This *a priori* assumption influences Volf's analysis of his dialogue partners and results in him misunderstanding much of their theological proposals.

In the book's final chapters, Bidwell directly addresses Volf's attempt to form a direct link between a non-hierarchical Trinity and a Free Church ecclesiology. Given this section is readily recognised as the most valuable and influential part of Volf's monograph, it is somewhat disappointing that Bidwell only spends a small fraction of his work (roughly a quarter) critiquing Volf's proposal directly. Certainly Bidwell adequately and perceptively addresses in these chapters the broad perspectives that Volf proposes, but one wonders whether a more detailed critique would have been even more valuable. Nevertheless, Bidwell certainly raises some pertinent points. For example, he notes that a detailed explanation of the Trinity's features is conspicuously absent from Volf's work. You would expect such a rigorous treatment of the link between the Trinity and the Church to begin with not just a defence of Volf's (or Moltmann's) understanding of the Trinity, but a detailed explanation of its multifaceted characteristics. Both are absent. Further, Bidwell notes that the primary use that Volf makes of the analogy between the Church and the Trinity is structural, whereas surely missiological, liturgical, and church piety implications are just as significant. Bidwell's overarching critique in this section, though, is that while there remains a place for drawing an analogical link between the Trinity and ecclesiology, Volf in focusing exclusively on the Trinitarian analogy has neglected the importance of Christology. Bidwell writes "Volf provides a timely and valuable caution in that he loses sight of Christology in his pursuit of a church to reflect the Trinity" (p. 240).

Overall, Bidwell's work is a fine and necessary piece of analysis and it effectively critiques an important and influential theological work. Particularly his recognition of the strong (and not always positive) influence of Moltmann on Volf, the untested and assumed nature of his (i.e. Volf's and Moltmann's) Trinity, and the less than optimal use of primary sources are valid points. Volf certainly gives Bidwell ample opportunities for such detailed critique. In his overarching critical conclusions, however, Bidwell overreaches. For example, Bidwell's claim that Volf "effectively condemns every local church that has any vestige of hierarchical leadership" and that Volf's "thesis desires universal obedience to his revisionist view of Trinity and church" (p. 231) goes too far. If Volf's ecclesiological proposal is interpreted more accurately as merely carving out a theological space where the Free Church can be justified in its own

existence, then such criticisms could become less ardent in both content and tone. Similarly, if it is recognised that Volf's work makes no claim to be all-inclusive and complete, but is merely an exploration of the links between the Trinity and the church, then Bidwell's overarching critique of its neglect of Christology becomes less significant. For a complete view of the church must surely look beyond the analogical links between the Trinity and the church, *and* beyond the links between Christ and the Church. There are also analogical links between the eschatological kingdom and the Church, between missiology and the Church, between creation and the Church, and between anthropology and the Church. Indeed, for an ecclesiology to even approach completeness there must be adequate links formed to every theological *loci*. Volf certainly makes no claim to exclusivity or completeness, so the overarching critiques of Bidwell that is predicated on this assumption are quite overstated.

KEITH L. JOHNSON, *KARL BARTH AND THE ANALOGIA ENTIS*. LONDON: T&T CLARK, 2010. [ISBN 978-0-567-44134-8]

JOHN C. MCDOWELL
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Early in Barth's career he was negatively reviewed by Adolf Jülicher who accused him of a "subjectivist" reading of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. Since then Barth's work has been dogged by criticisms that have raised charges of "irrationalism", "fideism", and so on. A key moment in that critical story has been Barth's famous 1934 *Nein* to Emil Brunner's appeal to a form of "natural theology". Particularly in England (and to a lesser degree the United States), where a response to a more empiricistic version of the Enlightenment traditions dominated the modern intellectual imagination, this was perceived to be a clear indication of Barth's theological obscurantism. In this way, then, Barth's theologising has frequently been regarded as unhelpful to the engagement in fruitful conversation with an increasing post-Christian world, and as a betrayal of the *ratio fidei* (or the rationality of faith).

More recently, however, scholars have begun to appreciate more fully Barth's intellectual context—that his work was conceived in many ways as a response not simply to the legacy of nineteenth century theological liberalism, but more particularly to the impact of German Idealism. This has helped shape an appreciation of his critical response to certain types of rationalistic theology that have been uncritically generated by modern intellectual currents. In this context Keith Johnson's readable and insightful historically attentive theological study, the fruit of his Princeton doctorate, is most welcome. In several ways it may even be one of only a handful of near model doctoral theses on Barth in published form, coming as it does with an admirably clear, focused and manageable thesis; a careful depiction of texts and their contexts; a good scholarly theological style not threatened into self-justifying polemic; and attention to the development of thought in the story's two main figures.

I mentioned German Idealism in the context of Barth's broad umbrella judgments about "natural theology", and there are only brief and passing references to this in Johnson's text, as there also are to the 1934 controversy with Emil Brunner. The book's focus is instead on a set of critical conversations mid 1920s onwards that Barth had which contributed to his critique of one type of natural theology, the *analogia entis*. These conversations are with Roman Catholicism, and in particular a version of Thomism associated with the work of Polish Roman Catholic scholar Eric Przywara. The thesis is a simple one, but is particularly well developed in its historically focused engagement, careful reading of the relevant texts and in its sophisticated use of detail. The target of the thesis is largely the reading of Hans Urs von Balthasar, and to a lesser degree Brunner's, and Johnson maintains this: Barth's concerns with the uncontrollability of the event of divine Self-revelation, and of human sinfulness became focused on the *analogia entis* in the mid 1920s as a result of his accurate understanding of that doctrine as articulated by Przywara; and that although Barth did come in time to stop explicitly discussing the *analogia entis* his account of the *analogia fidei* and *analogia relationis* did not involve a theological shift towards Przywara's position. Instead, it was in fact an expression of analogy done well, or done in the shadow of Barth's own lifelong concerns with the Reformation principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*.

Along the way there is a very helpful explication of Przywara's theology through the impact of John Henry Newman on him. This is especially useful since Przywara's *corpus* remains little known to English speaking Protestants. The conclusion summarises well some implications of the style of the study for all further work in the area, two of which are worth noting: that it needs to be more carefully concrete and specific in its use of terms; and that it is about considerably more deeply rooted differences in theological commitment than that simply of *analogy* itself, commitments to "key theological doctrines that have distinguished Protestants from Roman Catholics for centuries." [p. 234]

The rhetoric of Protestant-Roman Catholic difference is important, but its form might be contested by some thinkers in order to prevent it from exaggerating and ossifying these differences. A prominent English Roman Catholic once informed me that Przywara's reading of Thomas was skewed by the late medieval receptions of Thomas. Johnson comes close to arguing the same, largely through Gottlieb Söhngen's and von Balthasar's theological conversations with the later Barth (see p. 232). The difference is that my Roman Catholic conversant believed that there were varieties of the *analogia entis* that were *prior to* the work of Barth, whereas Johnson regards the varieties as more recent and in many ways as the very product of theological engagement with Barth's work. If the former is the case, then Johnson's claims about the relationship of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism may not be as entirely stable as they appear in his text. This is a point of detail that does not deeply affect the benefit received from reading Johnson's text, but it does have more significant ramifications for further consideration of the nature of Roman Catholic claims to 'natural theology' and their potential convergence with, and divergence from, various Protestant theologies.

A slight gripe about the published form of Johnson's commendable book, however, is that a short abstract of the thesis on the rear of the book would be more helpful than the space being exhausted by four scholars' commendations. The publisher would do well to provide this for all future printings.

T.L. SMITH, *NATURAL THEOLOGY. THE DIALECTIC OF NATURAL THEOLOGY: EMIL BRUNNER AND KARL BARTH ON NATURE AND GRACE*. SAARBRÜCKEN: VDM VERLAG, 2010. [ISBN: 978-3-639-23182-3]

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Research projects are increasingly limited in scope and somewhat conservative by nature in consequence. T.L. Smith, however, opens with a startling claim to the project's grand design: "The following text will investigate the work of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner on natural theology, researching four hundred years of dialectical tension between natural and revealed religion to propose a new scientific discipline, a discipline informed by the past and present." (p. 9) This is not so much daunting in the task it has set itself, but quite frightening in its over-ambition, although having 356 pages of text to play with does offer some hope that the stew will not be watery in its substance.

Since only one major study of Barth's engagement with Brunner has appeared recently in English there is plenty of potential for Smith's text to be usefully instructive. The reason for the lack until that point had largely been the fact that much English language reception of Barth had been determined by Brunner's perspective in their print conflict of 1934. In 2001, however, John W. Hart made ample use of the recently collected correspondence between the two Reformed theologians that illuminated their relations in ways not previously understood apart from a handful of earlier references to each other, and the polemical publications of the year that Hitler assumed full control and the Barmen Declaration was composed. It is in fleshing out the broader context of the controversy in terms of the exchanges that Barth and Brunner had been engaged in since 1916, and in particular in assessing their relationship through their correspondence, that Hart has provided a useful service. These are materials that, when read well, could provide the reassessment of this controversy that numerous Barth-scholars have for a few years now been suggesting is badly needed. The book's main merit lies in challenging the 'political reading' of the dispute, the kind of reading that takes one of two routes: that the spirit of the age (1) made Barth see demons where there were none; or (2) made him imagine they were larger and more dangerous than they really were. After all, one should recall, late in his life Barth reflected on how he would have handled the matter very differently had it occurred in the 1960s.

Hart's second main value resides in recognising that there were *real* issues at stake. For too long numerous British and N. American readers have taken uncritically Brunner's claim that there was no difference except in Barth's mind, only to miss Brunner's subsequent slippage into asserting that *there is a difference at the semantic level*, and final slippage into admitting that *there is a difference at the material level*, only that Barth should have agreed with Brunner. Importantly Hart acknowledges and details Barth's charge that Brunner had allowed a space to open up that was untouched by sin, and unread trinitarianly, that operates by way of a *preparation* for the reception of grace. Despite Brunner's claim to the contrary, his *negative* natural

theology was no less a *natural theology* than was a *positive* natural theology. More detailing here on Barth's move against Kant would be instructive, as well as subvert readings that continue to insist that Barth's rejection of natural theology was Kantianly performed. Brunner was more Kantian than Barth here, and that debate with post-Kantian 'modernity' is highly significant to notice in reading the latter.

Smith, on the other hand, provides an attempt to locate Barth and Brunner in the "very cultural developments giving rise to Schleiermacher, the Pietists, and the orthodox confessions in their attempt to preserve revelation over and against natural religion that had marked German Protestant theology since the late seventeenth century." [p. 31] Smith does acknowledge that Barth's critique of natural theology was the culmination of tensions resulting from Kant's work (p. 13), but insufficiently presses this point home in any detail. It is in directing the reader to this longer-term contextualisation that the book has value: "Barth's *Nein!* was not simply a rejection of natural theology but a rejection of what Karl Barth perceived as three hundred years of Protestant and Catholic theological developments emphasizing natural religion over revelation" (p. 24).

Nevertheless, this is a deeply problematic study on several levels. An adequate sophistication of reading is frequently missing. Is it really the case that reason came to dominate religion in the Enlightenment as Smith suggests (p. 33), or rather that reason took a different path from that of the teleological reasoning of theological contexts and in its light religion came to take on a different form?

Secondly, the presentation of the issues is generally unclear. For instance, it is not always clear what Smith means by 'natural theology'. In his introduction he slips into talk of 'natural religion', and mentions the development of modern arguments for the existence of God from nature. This is one kind of natural theology certainly, but is it really the pre-eminent one Barth's critique is concerned with? After all, Brunner is not concerned to utilise the so-called cosmological, teleological or moral arguments for God's existence, and this suggests that something different is going on in Barth's critique. (In fact, Brunner makes clear that his "capacity for revelation" is not itself a positive *natural theology* at all, but only the conditions for suggesting that apologetic proclamation can take place to those who have not yet encountered the Self-revealing God. Moreover, the controversy between Barth and Brunner is *not* about natural and revealed religion at all, since both argued that the knowledge of God is revealed and only revealed—for Brunner the "capacity" does not provide material *content* to any claims about the knowing of God, but simply provides the *formal* "point" for God's contact and a contact that can enable *eristics* to function. Smith simply makes a mistake, and a pretty fundamental one at that, in regarding Brunner as a fruitful conversant in developing a positive natural theology for today.) The introduction also speaks of a contemporary distinction often made between natural theology and a theology of nature (the latter Smith still thinks is a methodological matter), and claims that "Barth's criticism applies to all theology related to nature" (p. 16). That Smith thereafter immediately refers to "the early Barth" would suggest at the very least that the book would have to attend carefully the matter of a *shift* having occurred in Barth's work in order to enable him to write *CD* III. While this would be a difficult argument to maintain, it would at least be a meaningful one. However, the study does not address the issue. At the most, this might signal a confusion of understanding what 'natural theology' means in the

hands of Barth, the deistic inspired arguments or proofs being but one of several forms. That this has taken place is suggested by Smith's question about "what justification can there be for natural theology or any dialogue between science and religion after ... Karl Barth's denial of natural theology?" (p. 20).

Moreover, Smith elides careful and lucid specificity in handling terms and concepts. He claims that "Karl Barth identified the anthropological basis for Protestant theology in Gogarten to be no different from the natural theology that developed in both Roman Catholicism and neo-Protestantism" (p. 17). Barth, in contrast, recognised that there were real differences between neo-Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and he never charged Brunner's theology with being identical to these. It is instead more adequate to say that *at the root* of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis* and neo-Protestant subjectivity Barth recognised a similar problem. In other words, his criticisms of Gogarten, Bultmann, Przywara, and Brunner are more criticisms of a family resemblance. (Smith problematically misses the significance of Barth's engagement with Przywara in the late 1920s, and this conversation with Roman Catholicism is distinctly missing from Smith's attention to Protestant modernity.)

Finally, the adequacy of Smith's reading of Barth, for example, is highly contestable. On page 34 Smith claims that "Karl Barth's reaction to this dialectic [of reason and revelation] would swing the pendulum to the ... extreme position of revelation alone entirely independent of natural theology." Certainly this has been a common reading of Barth, but it is a difficult one to sustain when one considers, for instance, that the human *ratio* is what it is and is purified when it thinks after the divine *Ratio*; that Barth describes theology as *Wissenschaftlich* and as *critical reflection* on church proclamation; and that he leaves open the possibility of recognising (which involves making reasoned judgments on) "parables of the kingdom"; all of which is hardly something he could do if he was advocating "revelation alone". This claim adds further to the confusion over how Smith understands 'natural theology' since he here associates it with 'reason', as such, and that is certainly not how the term functions in Barth's critical theology.

Two gripes about formal matters—firstly, having italicised *and* underlined sentences appears a little odd, and untidily distracting. Secondly, an abundance of typographical mistakes suggests the manuscript was insufficiently proof read.

The introduction promises that "A follow on work will develop the contribution of Emil Brunner and the later Karl Barth for natural theology in Dogmatics" (p. 24). One can only hope that that is considerably more carefully conceived and executed than this confused and confusing text.

J.I. PACKER AND THE EVANGELICAL FUTURE: THE IMPACT OF HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT.
EDITED BY TIMOTHY GEORGE. GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER ACADEMIC, 2009. [ISBN: 978-0801033872]

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The collection of essays comprising *J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future* represents a portion of the widespread gratitude and respect that Packer has earned as a leading evangelical statesman of the past half-century. The writers include friends, colleagues and former students who variously pay tribute to his role in revitalising evangelicalism. Each of these selects an aspect of Packer's life and thought as a means for considering where the future may lead Evangelical Christianity—in the words of the editor—its “opportunities, dangers, discipline and direction” (p. 10).

Most of those who pick up this book will be admirers knowing Packer only as an author but who want a wider view of this writer that shows us the man, his ministry and his method, which have made his literary efforts so influential in our time. Readers will not be disappointed, although the contributions are not uncritical. Many insights into the makings of this evangelical giant are presented in this volume, both in the biographical snippets that arise from time to time, and in the personal stories that the writers share of their experiences with him. With regard to his ministry, a good deal of his work for the cause of the gospel is analysed and extolled—a worthy offering for those desiring to emulate his efforts. Additionally, for those more mechanically minded, there are several opportunities for examining the ‘inner workings’ of Packer's theological method—what may be called the ‘engine’ that has driven and guided his service to Christ throughout his long life.

Not all of the contributors are uncritical in their praise of Packer; although they are nonetheless drawn from the large number of those grateful for his ministry. Donald Payne's article on Packer's theological method perceives some inconsistencies in his approach to theology. For example, he notes that despite his affirmation of the christocentricity of theology, most chapters of his *Knowing God* lack this element save for the very end of each subject (p. 62). Another that Payne notices is Packer's apparent reservation concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics. While claiming that the Spirit is essential in authenticating the Bible as God's word, as well as in applying it, Packer seems to lapse into a “tacit, anthropocentric rationalism” when it comes to the actual work of exegesis (p. 64).

These criticisms must be weighed more fully by any reader who cares to investigate them, although this writer does not think they should cause too much concern. With regard to the first criticism, it should be remembered that *Knowing God* is only a brief introduction to understanding God and the way we may understand him in relation to ourselves. Relating the subject of each and every chapter to Christ is doable (and done), but to be done thoroughly (without tediously covering every single step in one's theological tracks) would take more space than what Packer probably wanted his book to contain, since it was meant

for a lay audience. It is better to acknowledge that what Scripture reveals about the character of God before the arrival of Jesus, can still be understood apart from Jesus, although it should always be used to point ahead to him—which is what we find to a greater or lesser extent towards the end of each chapter. Furthermore, the studies on God (part II of *Knowing God*) should be considered with the concluding section (part III) of the book, which bring together all that has been learned about God for the climax of the achievements of the gospel and what it means for living as Christ's younger brothers and sisters in the family of God.

As for the second criticism, it should be wondered what exactly it is that Payne does expect. Critical biblical scholarship has shown that one can indeed study a biblical text and grasp what it *meant*, without having the slightest inclination toward recognising it as an authoritative word from God that ought to affect their life in some way in the present. To criticise Packer's hermeneutical method for omitting any involvement of the Spirit in the actual work of exegesis seems to be an unnecessary search for loose threads. If one's exegetical work is prayerfully framed by an acknowledgement that the Spirit has made one submissive to the Bible and will guide one's application of it, should not the effort of the mind be considered sanctified, even if (according to Packer) the Spirit is not directly involved here? A proposal by Payne on how to otherwise bridge this gap would have been welcome.

The final chapter of *J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future* is a response from Packer himself to the contributions made at the conference on which this book was based (pp. 171-85). A great part of his concern in this chapter has to do with the legacy which he will leave behind. As he sees it, evangelicalism suffers for a lack of literature and ministry which aims to educate adult believers. There is plenty of basic and devotional literature available aimed at young people and new believers, and plenty of higher level books and institutions for clergy and ministerial students, but not much in between. He notes that such "in between" teaching was not common in his earlier years, and that if anything it has decreased since then.

Given that Packer makes much of this issue in his response to the papers presented concerning him and his ministry, one should wonder if the contributors missed a central goal of his lifelong efforts as an adult catechist. His books are typically written to this end, and the "Puritan and Reformed Study Conferences" which he (together with Martyn Lloyd-Jones) established sought to strengthen evangelicalism by reconnecting it with its intellectual heritage. A contribution which outlined and assessed Packer's efforts and accomplishments in reinstating catechistic ministries in the evangelical movement would have been a welcome addition to the book. Such a chapter would no doubt promote the kind of catechistic ministries that Packer hopes to leave as his legacy.

J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future set out to consider how Packer's life and ministry has shaped evangelicalism, and how this shaping might continue into the future. The latter part of that goal should have been developed further, as a means to advance the ambitions of the man these essays seek to honour. However, the picture they do provide of Packer will give encouragement to the thoughtful and intentional reader to take up the challenge where Packer is leaving off.

ROBERT SCOTT, *‘DEAR ABDULLAH’: EIGHT QUESTIONS MUSLIM PEOPLE ASK ABOUT CHRISTIANITY*. NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND: IVP, 2011. [ISBN: 978-1844745289]

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‘Dear Abdullah’ is written for primarily two audiences—Christians who would like to be able to answer questions from Muslims gently and honestly, and Muslims who genuinely wish to understand who Christ is. *‘Dear Abdullah’* is a short easy-read that presents in a simple way some entry points for discussion when Christians are dialoguing with Muslims about the Christian faith.

Scott seeks to answer in an accessible and truthful way eight questions he has formulated as representing either questions commonly asked by Muslims or questions he believes the answer to which will give Muslims a deeper appreciation of what it means to follow Jesus. Scott dedicates a chapter in *‘Dear Abdullah’* to each of the following questions: How can we know an incomprehensible God? Don’t Christians only do Sundays? What sort of God can be born as a baby? But don’t Christians worship three Gods? Where does Christianity end and Western culture begin? Hasn’t the Bible been corrupted? How can we be sure about God? Also woven throughout *‘Dear Abdullah’* is a succinct account of the basics of Islam and the wider narrative in Scripture of God’s relationship with humanity. Because Scott’s hope is that the information presented in *‘Dear Abdullah’* will be able to be applied practically, the end of each chapter includes a series of questions that seek to provoke more in-depth thought on the material presented.

Scott helpfully states the Christian theological position he subscribes to and the basis upon which he engages with the Qur’an. He states his purpose for referring to the Qur’an as being to illustrate the possible origin of objections to Christianity, and therefore steers away from drawing on the Qur’an for other purposes. For this reason, Scott avoids extensively commenting on a book that is not ‘his book’. The focus of *‘Dear Abdullah’* is primarily to offer an explanation of what it means to follow Jesus rather than to respond to Islam or to highlight any ‘inconsistencies’ or ‘shortcomings’ in Islam. It can, therefore, be distinguished from other works, such as Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb’s *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, which adopt an apologetics-type approach.

Scott provides a meaningful account of what it means to follow Jesus in a number of different ways. For example, in some instances he draws on commonalities between Islam and Christianity while on other occasions he shows how they differ. Scott’s depiction of God as Creator God is demonstrated as a good starting point for discussions about Christianity with Muslims by reason that Muslims also believe in a creator. The expression of the Christian God as being interested in the day-to-day existence of individual human beings, however, stands in contrast to Islam where Allah is regarded by some Muslims as too immanent and transcendent to be interested in everyday life. In other instances Scott presents characteristics of the Christian God as being consistent throughout both the Old Testament and New Testament in response to suggestions he alleges Muslims make that certain of the Christian God’s characteristics are novel

to the New Testament. Examples of this are seen in the Christian God who personally makes covenants with humankind and who comes to Earth to be with His people.

A number of literary works have been produced which explore the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and Islam and seek to bring them into dialogue with one another. There are works like Geisler and Saleeb's *Answering Islam* which summarise and critique some of the fundamental beliefs of Islam and then go on to provide a defence for the Christian faith by responding to arguments against Christianity which have been made by Muslims. There are also works like Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk's *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1997) that take a different approach in that they allow a Christian to speak to Christian beliefs and a Muslim to speak to Muslim beliefs and then present their dialogue with one another.

The mere 150 pages of *'Dear Abdullah'* and the fact that it is only written from a Christian perspective means that it does not contain the level of depth in content and analysis of other more comprehensive works, such as those referred to above. However, the strength of *'Dear Abdullah'*, when placed within the landscape of literature on Christian-Muslim relations, is its accessibility. *'Dear Abdullah'* is a good introductory book for those Christians who wish to grow in their understanding of the questions Muslims commonly ask about the Christian faith and for those Christians who would like to dialogue with, for example, Muslim friends, neighbours and colleagues. It, therefore, should be regarded as making a valuable contribution to the dialogue on Christian-Muslim relations.

One thing Scott does not do is identify for his audience that there are many different expressions of Islam, and that there is therefore likely to be variance in beliefs held by those Muslims reading *'Dear Abdullah'* and Muslims Christians who have read *'Dear Abdullah'* encounter. The variation in beliefs may be influenced by any number of factors, including, for example, a Muslim's country and culture of origin. An awareness of the existence of such variance is important, particularly as Christians interact with and relate to migrant Muslims who have settled in urban centres around the globe who are from a range of backgrounds and Islamic expressions. Another factor Christians should be cognisant of, which is not mentioned by Scott, is that there may be differences between what Islam actually teaches and how Muslims themselves conceive of what it is they believe. The best starting point in being able to identify any discrepancies of this nature must be, first, through listening.

Scott presents conservative theology at times in theological spheres that are currently subject to considerable debate. An example of this is his endorsement of John Piper's view that a wife should submit to her husband in the husband-wife relationship. As there are, however, a number of theologians who now support an egalitarian view of the husband-wife relationship, *'Dear Abdullah'* would have benefited from painting a more balanced perspective on the theology that exists in relation to the husband-wife dynamic rather than expressing the position propounded as representing "biblical truth".

With the increase in migration of Muslims around the globe and the expansion of Islam, the acquisition of at least a basic understanding of Islam and the questions commonly asked by Muslims about the Christian faith will be important not only for Christians to be able to build relationships with Muslim neighbours, colleagues and so on, but also in order to share Christianity with them in a meaningful way.

Scott's belief that "all people everywhere are made in God's image, even those who disagree with me, and they are worthy of great dignity, care and love" permeates the pages of *'Dear Abdullah'* and the approach he encourages Christians to embrace when engaging with Muslims. While Christians will not glean from *'Dear Abdullah'* a comprehensive understanding of Islam, *'Dear Abdullah'* is a good starting tool for Christians who wish to speak about the Christian faith in a meaningful way with Muslims and do not have much background in the study of Islam.

JENSEN, DAVID H. EDITOR. *THE LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE: PERSPECTIVES ON CONSTRUCTIVE PNEUMATOLOGY*. LOUISVILLE: WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX, 2008. (206 PP) [ISBN: 978-0664231675]

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The book delivers what it promises in the Introduction. The essays represent a constructive attempt to explore the doctrine of the Spirit "as it informs and is shaped by issues that face life in the churches [and] the life of the world" (p. xiii). For a book with less than 200 pages, it is understandable that the topics selected for the reflections are limited to a few: the ecological crisis, the burgeoning influence of economics, the difficulties associated with the modern forms of empire and colonialism, the difficulties in interpreting Scripture, and the challenge of appropriating world religions. In a sense, the project can be considered as the first instalment of a colossal project and an example of what theological formulation would look like when pneumatology is integrated in the different areas of daily human life. The vision that it seeks to share, i.e. the importance of pneumatological approach to "a theology of everyday life" (in the words of Ignatius of Loyola), is convincing and worth pursuing, although the book is not the first to suggest the general idea. There is no mention, allusion or even acknowledgement of the agenda which Radical Orthodoxy propagates, but there is an interesting similarity in the desire of the authors to abolish the notion of the absolutely secular or of the *natura pura*. Sallie McFague's article that speaks of the Holy Spirit, quoting Gerard Hopkins, as "the dearest freshness deep down things," provides one of the clearest evidences of the books' agenda.

In the book, there are three articles that rebuke theology and ask it to end the welcome it has extended to the Platonic-Gnostic dualism between the spiritual and the physical which has prevented the church from appreciating the "spiritual-ness" of the bodily. Jensen opens up the discussion (and the whole book) by presenting a historical survey of how theologians throughout history have understood and affirmed the neglected and ill-forgotten fact that the Spirit works in animating and enlivening physical bodies. The Spirit, Jensen rightly reminds his readers, is the "Lord and Giver of life." Another article, situated far from Jensen's, both complements and transcends his proposal. For Eugene F. Rogers Jr., the Spirit does not only enliven bodies, but rests on entities parapsychically, "alongside, in excess of, and in addition to the physical" (87). It is the Spirit's particular agency to exist alongside creaturely existents, ordering and sustaining their contingent lives. Interestingly, however, Rogers adds that the Spirit also works *para* the Son and *para* the

Father, thus adding the important Trinitarian aspect to the Spirit's work. Sallie McFague furthers the arguments of both Jensen and Rogers, yet perhaps overdoes it in her essay "The Dearest Freshness Deep Down Things." Perhaps Jensen and Rogers may even be unwilling to accompany McFague in her radical proposal for understanding the God-world relation. If for Jensen the Spirit animates bodies and for Rogers the Spirit rests alongside bodies, for McFague, the world itself is the body of the Spirit. As such, although Jensen and Rogers view the Spirit as a distinct entity from the bodies the Spirit works with, for McFague such a distinction is completely abolished. Her statement "God is in all things and all things are in God" (p. 117) suggests a pantheistic cosmology. That she can claim that "God is not a being, but reality... God is the stuff out of which everything comes to which it will return... There is not 'God and the world' but 'God in the form of the world'" (p. 118) strongly supports pantheism. Nevertheless, with such a theologically shaky foundation, she proceeds to proclaim her environmental concerns and hope for the future of the planet. Her article gives one a picture of healthy flowering plants nourished by dung.

Amy Plantinga Pauw's essay "The Holy Spirit and Scripture" addresses the problem of multiple, and often contradictory, interpretations of Scripture. She insinuates that diverse and incongruous interpretations may be the result of guidance from spirits other than the Holy Spirit. Thus, she enumerates three basic qualities of the Holy Spirit—bond of love, giver of all life, and exorcist—which are also the criteria for testing the spirits. Molly T. Marshall's "Breathing, Bearing, Beseeching and Building" supplements Pauw's arguments by stressing that "practices of discernment are critical" although she adds that "the role of the Holy Spirit in them seems indeterminate, at best" (p. 41). Although both Pauw and Marshall agree on the centrality of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Scripture, they are quite different in their emphases concerning the agency of the Spirit in relation to a community of Christian believers, the church. Marshall argues for the centrality of communal reading and interpretation and the importance of building generative consensus. Pauw, on the other hand, challenges the traditional interpretation of the church. Although she believes that "the Spirit has institutional affiliations," the Spirit also "transcends church structures and even the boundaries of human society" (p. 31). In fact, she seems to argue that it is the church that is in need of the Spirit's work when she concludes that "it is only inherited readings of Scripture that need exorcism" (p. 38).

Two essays devoted to a pneumatological understanding of world religions go side by side: Roger Haight's "Holy Spirit and the Religions" and Amos Yong's "Guests, Hosts, and the Holy Ghost." It is indubitable that Haight's inclusivism is Rahnerian through and through, although Bernard Lonergan's thesis that the Father sent the Holy Spirit in the world first before the Son also provides the second grounding presupposition of his position. The Holy Spirit is indeed at work in the world democratically. The Spirit's agency is not confined within geographical, ecclesiastical or denominational boundaries. But to conclude from these premises that world religions are evidences of the Spirit's work is a huge interpretative leap. One should ask: Is it not possible that world religions are not positive responses to the Spirit's work but are actually formed precisely in rejection and opposition to the Spirit? If one's answer to this question is in the affirmative, then the discussion would proceed differently. Yong's essay offers a more neutral position that

Haight's, although Haight's optimism is evident in Yong's articulation too. Yong is more concerned to cut through Gavin D'Costa's threefold responses to religions – exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism – and claims that “a pneumatological theology of hospitality” is the way to achieve this. There is, however, a thorn in Yong's wonderfully prepared bed of roses. Readers will discern that his proposal to be hospitable to other religions, although he claims that “a pneumatological theology of hospitality can help us embrace exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist practices” (p. 80), actually already involves an implied rejection of exclusivism.

Three essays in the book—Barbara A. Holmes' “The Spirit Holy, Hip and Free,” Joerg Rieger's “Resistance Spirit: The Holy Spirit and Empire,” and John B. Cobb Jr.'s “The Holy Spirit and the Present Age”—each addressing a specific context and concern, share a common argument: the Holy Spirit operates freely and is resistant to control and structure. Rieger argues that the Spirit is active in the world history resisting powers “which seeks to control all aspects of life and all of reality” (p. 130). Indeed, as Paul writes, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). But like the other essays in the book, Rieger radically stretches the implications of his proposals. Based on the assumption that “empire is manifest in unilateral and totalitarian structures,” he vaguely concludes that “fostering pluralism and diversity seem to be the Spirit's way of resisting empire” (p. 137). Part of the problem is that Rieger neither specifies nor elaborates the pluralism and diversity he has in mind. Cobb is also concerned about humanity's freedom from empires, but his vision of the Spirit's freeing agency is more specific. For him, it is non-conformity of the mind to today's *aeon*—economism—which is the most pressing work of the Spirit in the world. For him the market is the new expression of an enslaving empire that the Spirit resists. He rebukes the church for its legalistic preoccupation to sexual issues, and argues that the church should be more concerned with addressing how the market is changing everyone's lifestyle on earth.

There is a disturbing note, nevertheless, in the symphony that Holmes, Rieger, and Cobb are playing, although such a note can also be heard, however muffled, in the other essays as well. The authors seem to insinuate that religion in general and the church in particular, are an embodiment of an empire. Rieger illustrates that in Europe, “empire was often tied up with religious repression” (p. 141) so that the modern re-discovery of the dignity of individuals and human rights are the works of the Spirit. Cobb is more blatant than Rieger, claiming that today, like an empire filled with legal laws and expected customs, “religion both within and without the churches... is legalistic” (p. 152). Because we are living in a post-empire world, people, according to Cobb, “reject religion, and with it especially all forms of Christianity, in order to escape legalism” (p. 153). Thus, Cobb adds, “there are those who stand outside all religious institutions who embody the Spirit more fully than many who are within” (p. 153). This last quotation is a sentiment that Holmes shares in her essay. In fact, Holmes captures the bias shared by the authors of the book: “an underlying anti-establishment feel” (p. 110) that provide the foundation for the emphasis on the Spirit as both control-resistant and liberating.

Overall, in evaluating the book, one can borrow Colin Gunton's distinction between *doctrine* and *theology*. The former refers to the officially agreed teaching of the church, while the latter is a more open-ended activity. For instance, some of what Origen taught was considered heretical and some was accepted

as orthodox doctrines, but all that he wrote was theological. This means that theologians can theologize, raise questions and propose alternatives, but not all of these can be accepted as doctrines. In light of Gunton's distinction, we can say that *The Lord and Giver of Life: Perspectives on Constructive Pneumatology* is a work in theology, but a lot of what it says will find difficulty in becoming considered as doctrines.

MARTIN SUTHERLAND, *CONFLICT AND CONNECTION. BAPTIST IDENTITY IN NEW ZEALAND*. AUCKLAND: ARCHER PRESS, 2011. (XXIV + 260 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0473192167]

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Martin Sutherland, currently Vice-Principal at Laidlaw College in Auckland, is one of New Zealand's leading Baptist historians and this latest publication adds significantly to his deserved reputation. Not a conventional denominational history in the sense of a chronological and thematic narrative, it most helpfully marks out significant aspects of that history. This collection of essays is "an interpretation of Baptist life in New Zealand, exploring the tension between Baptists' talent for conflict and their desire for connection" (p. xix). His integrating theme is the quest for identity, a recurring question not only for settler nations like New Zealand and Australia but also for global Baptists. Although many of these chapters have been published previously as articles in a variety of places it is helpful to have them collected here and woven into a coherent theme. Thus this book complements and in some cases redefines earlier historical publications by New Zealand Baptists.

Indeed, Sutherland's book was only possible after these detailed local and denominational stories had been told as well as the valuable publication of documents and archival organisation had been completed. There is a scholarly maturity and reflective character to these chapters where the theme Sutherland identifies is abundantly illustrated.

Sutherland argues that Baptists are "the shape-shifters of Christian history", although it is not quite clear to this reader just what he means by this phrase. His view that Baptists are best studied not by "static essentialist understandings", such as doctrinal creeds or ecclesial practices, but as a dynamic movement changed by contexts and demands is perceptive. The competing forces of conflict and connection, quarrels and cohesion are key elements in understanding New Zealand Baptists and indeed the global Baptist community. Whilst many of his studies analyse conflicts of earlier periods he does not hesitate to discuss contemporary tensions in a spirit of "affection and respect". Here then is a Baptist history with relevance not only for those wanting to understand the religious experience in New Zealand but also for global Baptists.

In particular, Sutherland offers a wider context for the history of Australian Baptists. The parallels of development and direct personal influences across the 'ditch' of the Tasman Sea invite further reflection. Perhaps a collaborative effort by Baptist historians of both nations would be an instructive and valuable project for both bodies. Although 'Australia' is not listed in the index there are numerous individuals who

impacted on Baptists in both countries and the intertwining influences, as in so much of the history of the two 'dominions', are numerous. At one stage New Zealand shared in discussions with Baptists of the Australian colonies and explored possible structural links. Although this inevitably became impractical and from New Zealand's perspective undesirable exchanges have continued to benefit both communities. Sadly, differences and tensions between the Australian state bodies have over time diminished a genuinely national awareness to say nothing of a trans-Tasman connection. Australia offers a striking and virile example of just those conflicts and cohesive forces that Sutherland argues are a feature of Baptist identity.

An introductory essay situates New Zealand Baptists within the English 'diaspora' that continues to receive much scholarly attention and introduces the theme of the book: the history of New Zealand Baptists is "a litany of conflict". Four sections follow a broadly chronological sequence. In the first the dominant theme is conflict as Baptists struggled to find their place in the nation. Studies of Canterbury and Cambridge are followed by a discussion of the problem that confronted Baptists in many of the settler nations: finding suitable ministerial leaders. The famous Downgrade Controversy linked with Spurgeon had a strong impact in New Zealand as it did, for example, in Tasmania. Conflicts over religious education which raised the complex questions of church-state relationships and ecumenical cooperation is yet another issue that has resonance with Australian Baptists. The political activism of J.K. Archer, for whom there is no obvious Australian parallel, was another controversial figure to emerge among New Zealand Baptists.

The second section, "Ways of Connection", studies forces that helped shape a credible denomination that was distinctly New Zealander. The influence of Alfred North and his son J.J. North provide striking evidence of this stage in the denomination's development although Joseph Kemp's impact in Auckland was significant. A strong denominational organisation, essentially male, was complemented by the roles of Baptist women through the Ministers' Wives Union and the Women's Missionary Union. The author's analysis of female Baptist spirituality as seen through the missionary movement is important. Linked with these forces of cohesion were the denominational paper, *The New Zealand Baptist* that gave a focus of identity for Baptists and the Theological College founded in 1926.

Part Three is called "Harmony and its Challengers" and offers studies of some sadly divisive figures whose moral failures threatened Baptist unity and identity. The "cover-up" of a "missionary crisis" is detailed with refreshing honesty and the challenges they posed for denominational integrity clearly analysed. There was a general move to "structure and control" in New Zealand society and Baptists tended to mirror this trend. The career of Oswald Machattie of Napier is outlined in detail and the crisis this provoked for the Baptist Union during the 1930s is a striking demonstration of the book's theme. However, the 1940s were "the most disrupted years in the denomination's history" with the Auckland Tabernacle crisis over Dr Alexander Hodge, controversy over involvement with the World Council of Churches, and the forced resignation of Luke Jenkins as Principal of the Theological College.

Possibly the most challenging section for contemporary leaders is Part Four, "Shifting Sands", which first recounts changes in the Theological College from 1952 to 1974 described as "hesitating too long". His conclusion is that the college which had played a key role in fashioning denominational identity struggled to find its own way in the 1970s and was "no longer generating the core of the denomination's ethos". The

last provocative chapter is termed “from confidence to chaos” which argues that the charismatic movement which has had a striking influence on New Zealand Baptists had inevitable consequences for denominational structures and marked a “centrifugal model” of organisation. A series of restructures, in which decentralisation and devolution of denominational leadership was fused with what was termed “apostolic leadership”, has led to the confusion that Sutherland identifies. As a shrinking denomination in the twenty-first century New Zealand Baptists are hesitant and unsure of themselves.

A concluding “unhistorical postscript” links the New Zealand experience with global Baptists. Conflict seems to be a feature of church life, not only among Baptists. But conflict can be a force for good if it is handled sensitively and honestly although modern Baptists seem to be embarrassed by vigorous argument. A drift to hierarchical leadership has muted debate and dissension. A desire to avoid conflict prevents real change, Sutherland concludes, and that is fatal for Baptists who need to be constantly reinventing themselves.

This is a stimulating and relevant book that insists that troublesome questions should not be ignored. New Zealanders have a resource here that should provoke not only a sharper awareness of lessons from the past but also an honest assessment of the contemporary. Baptists in many other places will also find this an invaluable resource since the New Zealand experience, here so perceptively reviewed, will provoke searching questions for many other contexts.