

# MIDWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume 7

Fall 2008

No. 1

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**Editorial**

This issue is a compendium of articles written by various faculty members of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a graduate student from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Each is committed to scholarship in the service of Christ and the church.

I wish to offer special thanks to Terry Wilder for his past service as journal editor and for his help in the transition. I also wish to thank Steve Andrews for his advice and help on this edition and planning for the future.

The first article is a submission from Thor Madsen, the Academic Dean of Midwestern Seminary. The article deals with the problem of evil with specific reference to the power of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus.

The second article is a helpful piece submitted by Jim Hardwicke that will aid in understanding what is meant by the term "emerging church."

The third article is by Midwestern's new theology professor, Rustin Umstadd. His article explores the role of the Holy Spirit in the manifestation of God's love and wrath.

The fourth article represents some of my own thoughts concerning the Sabbath. It represents an effort to understand what role the Sabbath can and should take in our modern lives.

If you would like to have a Midwestern Seminary faculty member speak in your church, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are more than happy to serve you.

Enjoy!

N. Blake Hearson, Ph.D.  
Managing Editor

## **THE RISE OF PHARAOH AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**

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### **Abstract**

Several answers to the problem of evil have been given by philosophers and theologians, most of which dwell on such matters as free-will and the soul-building effects of adversity. At the highest levels of abstraction, these defenses have a 'greater-good' structure: evil and suffering, presently allowed by God, yield 'pros' that outweigh the former as 'cons.' Likewise, the biblical writers trace the occurrence of evil and suffering back to the transcendent sovereignty of God and, from there, to a greater good served by the rise of evil. One such text is the Exodus narrative, which sees the deliverance of Israel in the light of Yahweh's purpose of self-revelation.

The problem of evil (POE) arises from Christian theology because the latter makes the following claims about God:

1. God is all-knowing.
2. God is all-powerful.
3. God is morally-perfect.
4. God created everything.

We also would affirm on the basis of experience—to say nothing of vast exegetical evidence—a fifth claim which seems to stand in tension with the first four:

5. There is evil.

Wicked people arise, gain power over others, and then mistreat them. From petty rudeness to outright violence, our world offers a minefield of injury and grief caused by 'moral evil,' the evil resulting from misbehavior. But it also confronts us with natural calamities: around the corner and around the world, disease, accidents, storms, and earthquakes

lie in wait. Whole villages disappear beneath mudslides. Entire islands vanish under waves. Most of us will die in pain—some more, some less. But we know the awful truth and ignore it when we can: we too will get old, and it will not be easy. Perhaps, then, claim (5) contradicts (1) through (4), understood as a set of essential claims. Opponents of classical theism, defined by the affirmation of (1) through (5), argue that there is no ‘perhaps’ about it: one of them must go, if theism is to survive.

The *prima facie* contradiction can be uncovered in straightforward terms. If (1) is true, God would know about our suffering and how to cope with it. If (2) is true, he could do whatever it takes to banish suffering from our world. If (3) is true, he would desire to rid the world of evil and suffering; and if (4) is true, no excuse for the world’s suffering can surface from the idea that dark, raw materials are cramping God’s creative style. If he made everything, he established each thing’s tendency—for better or worse—in the act of *ex nihilo* creation. No Christian would be silly enough to deny (5). Therefore, we have the problem of evil, the most difficult challenge to orthodox theism. How can we possibly behold the world’s rapes and murders, its cancers and catastrophes, and say about it all, “This too must occur,” if that is what we must say?

At this point, readers of Scripture will remind us that none of these things would happen now if Adam and Eve had not rebelled against God. Sin has landed us in pain. We are the ones to blame. God reckoned the guilt of Adam to our account, and we suffer and die now in consequence, just as he also promises to count the righteousness of Christ—his vicarious suffering and perfect obedience—in our favor, if we trust him to do so (cf. Genesis 3 and Romans 5, *passim*). These theological claims must play a central role in any response to the POE, because they constitute a “buffer zone” between God and sin and, therefore, between God and evil. He is not the proximal or efficient cause of wrongdoing and thus of the latter’s judicial consequences—we are, first Adam and Eve, then all of their fallen descendants. We sin and suffer for a simple reason. We like it. We desire independence from God and get what we ask for. If we cannot say this much, we have no gospel to preach either.

Nevertheless, these responses address the problem only halfway. We must press on because (1) through (4) imply an attribute of God that the biblical writers also proclaim with gusto, though it undercuts some views of what our moral accountability implies. To wit: God rules always, everywhere, over all things, without exception. The skeptic wonders how God’s sovereignty in this sense leaves room for morally significant action (and so do we, though we presuppose that some harmonization is possible). But if we choose not to cherry-pick our doctrines from

Scripture but embrace the latter ‘as is,’ we find that God ultimately determines all that occurs, whatever proximal causes may operate. One can efficiently make this argument by working backward from the extreme cases to ordinary examples. That is, if the biblical writers tell us that God somehow ordains both wicked acts and insignificant events, nothing would prevent them (and therefore us) from saying that his sovereignty comprehends all events of whatever kind; and they do say as much.

Consider the case of evil acts. If God can ordain *them* and still be morally perfect, he can ordain anything.<sup>1</sup> The story of Joseph in Egypt provides a fine example, given its contrast between the wickedness of his brothers and his own sense of God’s hand upon him. The brothers first plot to kill him but then sell him into slavery (Gen 37.12-36). This event brings much pain on Joseph, 90% of which would have gone unrecorded; but he finally concludes that God has a purpose in his captivity: it was to save lives (Gen 45.5,8). In Joshua, the Northern Kings waged war against Israel, no doubt displeasing their God; yet the text credits Yahweh with inciting the pagans to fight (Josh 11.20). He can ordain the disobedience of sons to slay them (1 Samuel 2.25) and “raise up evil” against David’s house (2 Samuel 12.11). Yahweh even “incites” David to order a census (2 Samuel 24.1), though David will confess this act as his own sin (2 Samuel 24.10). Job ascribes the giving and taking in his life to the Lord’s sovereignty, even though the latter entailed both natural and moral evil (Job 1.21). Amos certainly has no difficulty tracing the evil that falls on a city back to God’s sovereign choice: “. . . if a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?” (Amos 3.6). The same message appears in Isaiah 45.7, where Yahweh causes peace and “creates calamity,” the latter being plausibly assumed to include both evil acts and natural disasters. The same principle applies to inconsequential events—just run-of-the-mill happenings: in Proverbs 16.33, God determines the landing of dice.

The NT evidence for God’s sovereignty over evil is equally compelling. A striking example would be the handing over of Jesus to be crucified. Peter condemns the act but covers it with God’s redemptive plan (Acts 2.23). Jesus himself asserts the exhaustive rule God, especially when the saints endure trial and sinners reject the gospel. In Matthew 10.16-39 (cf. Luke 12.6-7), Jesus guarantees that his disciples will suffer for the gospel. Discipleship forces one to choose sides. Yet he assures them with the doctrine of God’s exhaustive reign: “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the

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<sup>1</sup> On God’s ordaining of evil acts, cf. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Leicester: IVP, 1994), pp. 322-327.

ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows” (Mt 10.29-31). Not even persecution will land on them apart from the Father’s will. In John 6.65, Jesus accounts for the departure of many ‘disciples’ (not the Twelve) with reference to God’s sovereignty: “no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” The Father is displeased by their rejection of the Son; but in doing so, they have not slipped from his grasp. Finally, one considers the case of Revelation 6.10-11, where the martyred saints ask, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood?” To this question, they receive the reply, “and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.” The jarring fact here is that God decides how many saints will die for their faith, not the pagans who kill them.

We discover, therefore, that appeals to the activity of free agents can only take us so far, grateful though we may be for that sort of progress. We do not wish to argue that God just *does evil*, full stop; and to that degree, the free-will defense (= FWD) has an apologetic role to play.<sup>2</sup> Yet we cannot ignore the witness of scripture to God’s “ultimacy” with respect to the evil that men do.<sup>3</sup> Somehow, he remains firmly in charge of all that occurs, and thus the FWD is incomplete. Most challenging for the FWD is the picture of heaven drawn for us in such places as the Revelation, where two conditions obtain: (a) the saints are all there, glorifying God and enjoying him in morally-significant ways, and (b) they do so without the slightest chance of falling again. But (b) could not happen for eternity apart from God’s meticulous providence. He has to guarantee that we never sin by changing *us* somehow; and now comes the inevitable question. What would have prevented God from instantiating heavenly conditions from the start? The promise of glory implies that God could have actualized a world in which all people freely do only what pleases him. Why, therefore, did his plan include salvation history as we know it? The FWD insulates God from the charge of doing evil, but it does not answer this follow-up question. Why does God’s plan include the doing of evil when, from one perspective, it need not have done so? The biblical writers actually answer this question, subject to certain qualifications. First, they do not answer the question theoretically, as if to put philosophers of religion wholly at ease. We get

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<sup>2</sup> The strongest offering of the free-will defense has been given by Alvin Plantinga in *God, Freedom, and Evil*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> The term “ultimacy” is D. A. Carson’s. Cf. *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002 (1994)), p. 201.

from scripture at high-altitude, a macroscopic answer which will not help us to know just why Smith is allowed to violate Jones or why either of them gets cancer. Secondly, the biblical writers' answer will rest upon basic intuitions that are themselves undefended. In this regard, they are not unique: everyone has their theoretical stopping-points. We have ours, and they have theirs, the alternative being an infinite regress of explanations—just one after another, as the joke goes, “all the way down.” The plausibility of their answer, therefore, will not take the form of examining the premises that lead to their foundational assumptions, now treated as conclusions. Rather, we will have to consider whether these assumptions are consistent with their entire worldview, essentially whether they can live with the result of stopping where they have, both theoretically and practically.

Consider, then, the story of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery, which actually begins back in Genesis 15. In this chapter, Yahweh vows that Abraham will become the father of many nations and that he will inherit the Holy Land.<sup>4</sup> But the Lord's promise has a dark side, just as the ones given by Jesus often do. In v. 13, God says to Abraham, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.” Yahweh does not merely happen to know—because he is God—that these events will occur: he plans for them. This conclusion follows in light of v. 14, where he tells Abraham, “But I will judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” He could cut the years short at any point, but he chooses this extraordinarily long season of pain—about double the entire history of the United States. Likewise, he would have to determine that such events occur, lest his foreknowledge of them be defeasible by the actions of indifferently free agents.<sup>5</sup> Why would he do such a thing? The Exodus narrative outlines an answer to this question, subject to the qualifications noted above.

The story of the Exodus begins formally in the book of that name, where much evil and suffering is referred to in compact form. The Pharaoh fears the Hebrews because of their tremendous numbers and

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<sup>4</sup> At this point in the narrative, the patriarch is not called ‘Abraham’ but ‘Abram.’ I have used the familiar name as a convenience only.

<sup>5</sup> An agent has ‘indifferent’ liberty just in case for any action *A* that he happens to perform, no prior conditions obtained which prevented him from doing *non-A*. It seems to be clear enough that if the Pharaoh of Egypt had this kind of freedom, Yahweh could not be certain, 400 years in advance, that he would enslave the Hebrews. The whole plan could have been sidetracked by one indifferently free act—say, that Pharaoh chooses to run, and not walk, down the stairs of his palace one day, with Humpty Dumpty consequences following.

responds with greater oppression. The Egyptians increase their slaves' workloads, while restricting their materials, and even attempt to depopulate them through infanticide. Because Moses does not describe their suffering in detail, we have to fill in the story of their suffering with educated guesses, but one can safely reconstruct the questions that would have been asked by the Hebrews at that time. If this God loves us, why on earth would he let this evil man come to power and rule over us? Why should we suffer in this way? And even if we must endure some pain, why 400 years' worth? What keeps Yahweh from striking the Pharaoh dead right now? It is no stretch to imagine that some Egyptians, to say nothing of the Hebrews, would have asked confused forms of these same questions, minus particular knowledge of God's nature and abilities. But the suffering continues, year after year, generation after generation, to the point where hope itself becomes ridiculous and cruel. One solitary human being has so much power to wound; yet he reclines in his palace, vaguely happy and well-fed.

Even now, our world is filled with suffering caused by strongmen pursuing utopian causes, the latter cited to justify each stripe and gunshot. With arms they kill, and with pens they impoverish. Garden variety wickedness occurs right next door, out of sight, around the corner, beneath the surface—never precisely repeated, never fully detected. And God lets it happen, against his own moral will. Indeed, if we understand the scriptures correctly, his own plan works these events in, both the evil itself and the human indifference which chooses not to know and therefore not to act. So we ask the same kinds of questions that were raised above. Why would God not only endure, *but even ordain*, events which offend his moral perfection? At several points in the Exodus narrative, Yahweh gives something like an answer, though it may not be one to please every critic.

In chapter 5, Moses reaches a breaking point in his relationship with Yahweh. He has gone before the Pharaoh and repeated Yahweh's demand, "Let My son go that he may serve Me" (4.23, cf. 5.1). God had warned Moses not to anticipate success in changing the Pharaoh's mind. Moses will fail because, as Yahweh says, "I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go" (4.21). Nevertheless, when the Pharaoh responds with greater offenses, Moses complains to God: "Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all" (5.23). This complaint prompts Yahweh to disclose his final objective, the entire point of it all. Chapter 6 begins with an overview of what God has promised to do for the Hebrews: "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them

out of his land” (v. 1). And what purpose will this serve, i.e., other than to rescue them from conditions that he could have prevented?

Verses 2-7 reveal the answer. Even the patriarchs knew God as ‘El Shaddai,’ an omnipotent deity who makes extraordinary promises and keeps them; but they did not know him as ‘Yahweh,’ the Savior-King of the Exodus, who rescued them from slavery with signs and wonders that no one could have imagined.<sup>6</sup> This aspect of his nature is new to one and all, and the Exodus event will reveal it (vv. 6-7):

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’

When Yahweh rescues his people from slavery, they will encounter him personally as the God who hears their cry, remembers his covenant, and saves them for himself. Without the Exodus event, including the slavery leading up to it, this dimension of Yahweh’s nature would have gone undisclosed. Accordingly, Israel’s suffering serves the greater good of their God’s self-revelation: the latter could not happen without the former.

A similar inference can be drawn from the statements made by Yahweh in 9.1-17. Moses delivers the message to Pharaoh once more; and again, the prophet tells him that he has no choice but to surrender. If he does not, Egypt’s livestock will die. Indeed, they will die in a way that emphasizes both (a) Yahweh’s unchallengeable power over nature and (b) his sovereign election of Israel as his own people. Moses tells the Pharaoh that the Lord will “put a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt,” and he sets a “definite time” when the disaster will strike. Only the God of Israel would have this kind of control over natural forces—viz., regarding the boundaries of destruction and the latter’s temporal beginning and end. In this sense, the starting and stopping of nature’s forces against Egypt repeat in microcosm Yahweh’s command-control over the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1-2. When the last of Egypt’s firstborn has died (12.30-32), all questions

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<sup>6</sup> Much debate has occurred regarding the meaning of God’s name ‘YHWH,’ none of which can be treated here. Perhaps even that much should not be assumed, viz., that the name is readily definable along the lines of ‘Isaac’ or ‘Daniel.’ If one ventures a guess, however, some connection would have to exist between God’s name and the particular role that he will now assume as Israel’s Savior-King.

as to the sovereignty of Israel's God have been answered by the clockwork annihilation of Pharaoh's kingdom.<sup>7</sup> It also goes without saying that Yahweh's choice of Israel stands out in this drama—the death of some and the life of others—as it did also in his precise control over light and darkness in Exodus 10.21-29 (cf. Genesis 1.5, 14-18).

In the largest sense, therefore, these events occur because Yahweh intends to reveal himself—his power, goodness, and sovereign choice of Israel—to a particular people. He will call them as his priestly kingdom, and these events show them what sort of God they serve. As Exodus 9 indicates, Yahweh has even “hardened Pharaoh's heart” (v. 12), so that he would refuse to yield; and in so doing, this king opens the door for Yahweh to show “that there is no one like (him) in all the earth” (v. 14). Likewise, in Exodus 10.1-2, we see that these terrible events, both the slavery of Israel and the destruction of Egypt, have occurred, as Yahweh says,

. . . that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.

The purpose, at the end of the day, is that the people of Israel can reflect with awe and humility on the relationship that they have with this God and, in so doing, have a basis for undivided loyalty to him (cf. the Decalogues, noting especially the progression from self-revelatory indicative, “I am the Lord your God, etc.,” to the central imperative, “You shall have no other gods before me”).

Accordingly, one notes that the theodicy emerging from our study of Exodus has a ‘greater good’ structure.<sup>8</sup> Bad things happen, first to Israel, then to Egypt; but they happen for the sake of something more valuable than anyone's abstracted painlessness: to know who our God is, not simply because he tells us, but especially because he shows us through concrete actions that we can understand. Of course, this argument rests on a foundational assumption, the truth of which one just ‘sees’ or else not. That is, Israel's experiential knowledge of Yahweh *as Savior*, the one who rescues them from slavery, is worth all of that destruction and

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<sup>7</sup> As an analogy, one thinks of Muhammad Ali's announcing the exact round that his opponents would fall: if he can finish off his opponent in any particular round, he can do it in any round. He is fully in control.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. various strategies considered by Keith Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 123-165 and John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), pp. 135-141.

suffering. The argument offers no direct response to the critic who protests, "I don't care how marvelous your God is; knowing him has too high a price tag." One can, however, advance the discussion by asking a simple, follow-up question. If such a God exists, and if we might come to know and serve him, what else *could be* the highest good? Would such a God have anything better to offer us than a relationship with him, founded on displays of his immeasurable goodness toward us? Can that goodness be properly understood while his justice and wrath remain obscure? The answers given by Exodus are 'Nothing,' 'No,' and 'No,' respectively. Perhaps one dislikes the answers, but the writers of scripture do not equivocate.

Although our study concentrates on the Exodus narrative, one might observe that the Apostle Paul gives precisely this interpretation of the Exodus event, with special emphasis on the rise of Pharaoh. The larger case to be made in Romans 9 is that God's word never fails. We should never think, Paul implies, that God's sovereign will is ever compromised by sinners. The Apostle concedes and laments that Israel has just now rejected the Messiah Jesus; but he accounts for this fact in a way that preserves God's absolute reign. The latter has made promises to Israel, but his promises refer to the elect among Abraham's children, not to every person who is related to Abraham by blood (vv. 6-7). Similarly, just as God chose to bless Isaac rather than Ishmael, he also elected Jacob for blessing and not Esau (vv. 10-13). We do not know why God did this, though Paul flatly denies the explanation that rationalists favor, viz., that Jacob had done something—or, at any rate, that he would do something down the road—that sets him above his twin brother. On the contrary, God's antecedent choice accounts for subsequent differences between them, crooked as Jacob himself turns out to be in various ways; and this fact invites the rhetorical question: "There is no injustice with God, is there?" (v. 14). We might answer 'yes,' based on egalitarian impulses, as though God were obliged to give to all what he gives to any. But Paul himself invites us to consider our options carefully. In vv. 15-16, he quotes Exodus 33.9, "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,'" as if to argue that totalitarian fairness from God would prevent his showing mercy toward anyone, Jew or Gentile. In v. 17, the Apostle adds a second rationale, this one resting on Yahweh's own words from Exodus. To the Pharaoh, he says, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." Some people are chosen by God, and some are not. Without this doctrine, we are left with the inelegance that God has failed to accomplish his own sovereign will. But at what point does his sovereign will line up with his moral will, the end for which all history transpires? The essence of Paul

removes all doubt in Romans 9.22-23. God's final aim is to demonstrate both his power and wrath against sin (v. 22) and also to manifest "the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (v. 23). The highest good, to which all others must bow, is God's own purpose of knowing and being known by those whom he would save.

This essay is being written three weeks before the general elections in the United States. Some churches are now within days of calling a senior pastor. Leaders are seizing power and being chosen all over our nation and across the world. And in many cases, the results will not be favorable. Our country might elect for a president a man who is regarded by many of his opponents as evil, to say nothing of being merely wrong on the issues. He might do a generation's worth of damage, each month of his tenure including some new outrage—a series long enough to let the earliest ones be forgotten. Churches will call selfish egotists to lead them, though they mean to do otherwise. They will be unfeeling corporate men, loaded with gimmicks and devoid of grace. It will be too late, then. Six years, four years, or two: it all depends on the office. So we ask once more, why would God schedule their arrival? Why would he raise *them* up, as he raises up anyone who leads? If we may apply the lesson of Exodus across the board, we get this answer. God will make himself known to us; and if we have the faith to see how this result could follow from a present crisis, we would not want it any other way, notwithstanding the patience needed and the pain endured.

# **THE EMERGING CHURCH: HOMILETICS AND THEOLOGY**

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## **Abstract**

Confusion abounds concerning the emerging church and what falls under the metaphorical umbrella of the term. The following article summarizes the important elements that define so-called emerging churches in the area of homiletics and theology.

## **Introduction**

As a movement, the Emerging Church is reacting against the artificiality of modern evangelicalism and responding to postmodernism. As Reggie McNeal explains, “The postmodern world will demand a new church expression, just as did the rise of the modern world.”<sup>1</sup> Viewing postmodern culture similar to that of the first century, the Emerging Church seeks to return to a more authentic, holistic Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Facilitated by the internet, the movement has grown into an international network of individuals and groups who are regularly interacting about the concepts they hold in common.<sup>3</sup>

## **Emerging Church Homiletics**

The river of emerging churches divides into three streams. Doug Pagitt of Solomon’s Porch in Minneapolis describes those streams as: 1) churches that have returned to the Reformation (Mars Hill in Seattle), 2)

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<sup>1</sup> Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Blogger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 42.

<sup>3</sup> John Drane, “Editorial: The Emerging Church,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6, no. 1 (March 2006): 9.

churches that have made deep systemic changes, but are still church-centered and without theological changes (University Baptist in Waco and Mosaic in Los Angeles), and 3) churches that are kingdom-centered.<sup>4</sup> Though some common homiletical approaches flow in each stream, distinctive differences arise.

Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle models and promotes the preaching of the Reformation-style emerging churches. An unashamed five-point Calvinist, Driscoll reads authors like J. I. Packer and John Piper. He trumpets a return to a high view of God and Scripture. His preaching is generally expositional and long—often well over an hour. Pulling no punches about sin and the need for repentance, in secular Seattle he has become a phenomenon. *Salon* magazine Life Editor, Lauren Sandler, is an atheist. Yet she traveled the country for a year surveying what she believes is the beginnings of a great spiritual awakening in the youth culture. Evaluating Driscoll, she says, “Mark’s ingenuity, leadership, and reach has surely branded this young pastor the Jonathan Edwards of his age.”<sup>5</sup> Sandler further states, “To say that Mars Hill is just a church is to say that Woodstock... was just a concert.”<sup>6</sup>

Plenty of other pastors preach Reformed doctrine in a biblical manner and do not avoid the subject of sin and the need for repentance. What makes the appeal of Driscoll’s preaching so strong to liberal, pluralistic, postmodern Seattle? Two things help. For one, Driscoll’s authentic passion for God and his glory cannot be hidden. For example, at a Gen-X conference he was scheduled to preach at a dinner, but instead prayed a prayer of repentance for about twenty minutes. Driscoll says:

But God showed me what the speakers were saying that robbed God of his glory. I saw that people were believing those things. And I knew God wanted me to come as an intercessor. So I started repenting. It just kept coming and coming, and it got to the place where I didn’t know what to do. I’ve never had anything like that happen before. And when I was done repenting of those things, I didn’t feel like preaching, so I walked away.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gibbs and Bloger, *Emerging Churches*, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Lauren Sandler, *Righteous: Dispatches from the Evangelical Youth Movement* (New York: Viking, 2006), 48.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> The Leadership Interview, “Warrior, Chief, Medicine Man: Learning about ministry’s ancient ways from those older—and younger—than ourselves,” *Leadership Journal* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 48.

Driscoll's preaching attracts postmoderns for another reason. He connects with their culture. The church sponsors concerts featuring secular bands. Driscoll writes a column for the *Seattle Times*.<sup>8</sup> Mars Hill worship music has an indie rock flavor.<sup>9</sup> Driscoll preaches in jeans and an untucked shirt. He makes references to movies, music, and other elements of secular culture. Driscoll's stand-up comic humor also connects him with the culture. He says he learned his comic timing and skill by watching comedian Chris Rock.<sup>10</sup> Driscoll learned well; he keeps his congregation laughing. In one message last year he referred to the fact that his wife was into organic food, but he was not. He said, "I said, 'Yeah, honey, that's cool, but you will still shave your armpits.'" After a pause for laughter to subside, Driscoll added, "If you're a hairy-pitted gal [Pause], enjoy being single."<sup>11</sup>

Worship style and technology trends are not consistent in all emerging churches. Some have rock music; some have hymns. Some have all the latest gadgetry; some aim for simplicity. Yet one common trend in worship is a move away from entertainment and "show biz" to authentic worship. That does not rule out the use of symbols and drama. When Rob Bell planted a church in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1999, he began with a sermon series in Leviticus. But he made the scenes from that ancient book come alive. He says, "We didn't just talk about the pictures, we experienced them. I covered myself with fake blood, built fires on the stage, climbed atop a giant wooden altar. We had 'priests' wearing linen ephods marching up and down the aisles and brought in a live goat for the Day of Atonement."<sup>12</sup>

The second and third emerging church streams are not so focused on preaching propositional biblical truth. In fact, Brian McLaren says, "Instead of an exercise in *transferring information* so that people have a coherent, well-formed 'worldview' (often an upbeat name for 'systematic theology'), preaching in the emerging culture aims at

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<sup>8</sup> Sandler, *Righteous*, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Collin Hansen, "Pastor Provocateur," *Christianity Today*, September 2007, 46.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Driscoll, "The Weaker Christian," sermon in the series, *Christians Gone Wild*, preached July 2, 2006 at Mars Hill Church, Seattle, Washington; Online at: [www.marshillchurch.org](http://www.marshillchurch.org).

<sup>12</sup> Rob Bell, "Life in Leviticus: Planting this church, I spent a year preaching through Leviticus, and (surprise!) it worked," *Leadership Journal* (Winter 2002), 46.

*inspiring transformation.*"<sup>13</sup> Thus many emerging preachers have moved beyond the inductive and deductive methods of dealing with Scripture to what they call the "abductive method"—"to seize people by the imagination and transport them from their current world to another world, where they gain a new perspective."<sup>14</sup> Abductive preachers are urged to throw away their outlines and make sermons pointless. How does a preacher transport his listeners to this other world? Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer suggest using surprise, unpredictability, and story.<sup>15</sup> That term "story" seems to be a significant one for those not in the Reformed emergent camp. Pagitt says, "Theology is not the story of God, and it is not our story; rather, it is the understanding that allows us to connect the two...But it must never be confused with the life of God or the story of God."<sup>16</sup> At any rate, emergent leaders celebrate storytelling and emphasize narrative preaching.<sup>17</sup>

Some emerging preachers have taken a more radical approach. Their message time is so different that some are calling them "phd's" or "post-homeletical discourses."<sup>18</sup> Brian McLaren describes it as "a shared practice among preacher and hearers...The preacher becomes the leader of a kind of group meditation, less scholar and more sage, less lecturer and more poet, prophet, priest."<sup>19</sup> McLaren predicts that in this context preachers will be replaced by professional liturgists who will substitute the sermon for "a weekly experience of group spiritual formation."<sup>20</sup>

Doug Pagitt has written extensively about this new type of "preaching" in his 2005 book, *Preaching Re-imagined*. He calls traditional preaching "speaching," and flatly says that it does not work.<sup>21</sup> Instead, he suggests what he calls "progressional dialogue" in which "the content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between the presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the

<sup>13</sup> Brian D. McLaren, *Emerging Values: The next generation is redefining spiritual formation, community, and mission*, *Leadership Journal* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 36.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Sweet, Brian D. McLaren, and Jerry Haselmayer, *A is for Abduction: The Language of the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), 31.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-2.

<sup>16</sup> Doug Pagitt, "The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 123.

<sup>17</sup> Sweet, McLaren, and Haselmayer, *Abduction*, 205-7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> McLaren, "Emerging Values," *Leadership*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-imagined* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 18.

content are then created as a result of this relationship.”<sup>22</sup> In practice at Pagitt’s Solomon Porch, progressional dialogue primarily involves two things. Pagitt meets with a group of church members on Tuesday night and discusses the sermon topic with them to get their input and insights. Then during the worship service itself, after he speaks on the subject for a while, he then invites others in the congregation to share their thoughts and insights.<sup>23</sup> Dialogue occurs between the pastor and the members and between the members themselves. It is progressional in that the “message” may evolve and even take an entirely different direction as the discussion progresses. Pagitt sees that as acceptable because he views the concept of “the priesthood of believers” as sanctioning anyone present to “preach,” thus reworking past ideas of pastoral authority.<sup>24</sup>

An additional trend in this radical stream of emerging church “preaching” appears to be the abandonment of application. These emerging preachers value the process more than the point, the journey more than the destination. Pagitt makes a distinction between application and implication. Application is predetermined by the preacher for the hearer; implication arises spontaneously in the hearer in response to the “story.”<sup>25</sup> Pagitt likes implication because he thinks it has a sense of “What should *we* do?” instead of “What should *I* do?”<sup>26</sup> Besides being less individualistic, substituting spontaneous implication for predetermined application lets the hearer struggle. Pagitt thinks that frustration and destabilization is a good thing.<sup>27</sup>

Authenticity runs deep in the preaching of all emerging church streams. The preachers do not usually dress up. They speak in common, everyday language and avoid a “preachy” tone. They talk freely about their own weaknesses and let themselves get emotional when appropriate. Their illustrations and applications (when they make them) relate to everyday experiences and situations.

Preaching in emerging churches has one other thing in common. It is tailored for the pluralistic culture it is trying to reach. It respectfully welcomes those from other religions and backgrounds. Emerging preaching does not put down other religions, but points out the distinctiveness of Christianity. Mark Driscoll has been inspired by Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York. After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the percentage of non-Christians attending Keller’s church surged to nearly thirty percent. How

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 100-102.

did Keller keep them coming? He writes, "I don't directly make the naked claim 'Christianity is a superior religion,' and I certainly don't malign other faiths. Instead, I stress Christianity's distinctiveness...I preached, 'Christianity is the only faith that tells you that God lost a child in an act of violent injustice. Christianity is the only religion that tells you, therefore, God suffered as you have suffered.'"<sup>28</sup>

What can we as preachers in traditional churches learn from the emerging church? We can be more authentic in the way we speak. We can share more weaknesses and get sincerely emotional. Our illustrations and applications can turn toward everyday situations. Additionally, we can speak with sensitivity to those sitting in the congregation who might be of another religion or of no religion. We can recognize that someone out there that we are trying to reach might be of a different political party, a different lifestyle, a different background than most everyone else and thus add persuasiveness to our speech.

### **Emerging Church Theology**

Is Emerging Church theology orthodox? The answer depends on which stream of the movement one is examining. That differences exist is obvious. In his chapter in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, Driscoll writes, "I have also been greatly concerned by some of the aberrant theological concepts gaining popularity with some fellow emerging-type younger pastors."<sup>29</sup> In his response to Driscoll, Pagitt says, "in many ways we are telling different stories of Christianity."<sup>30</sup>

Representing the Reformed emerging stream, Driscoll not only believes orthodox doctrines, but he articulates them extraordinarily well. The basic doctrines of a trustworthy Scripture, a triune God, and a substitutionary atonement are extremely important to him. He even provides a creative approach to try to reconcile unlimited and limited atonement. Driscoll is not afraid to speak of hell.<sup>31</sup> Incredibly, Driscoll will camp out on the details of these doctrines for months at a time. He writes, "For example, I preached a three-month series on the atonement with the sermons lasting well over an hour, and I saw our attendance swell by over eight hundred in the first three weeks as people wept throughout the sermons, confessed their sins, and gave their lives to

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<sup>28</sup> Tim Keller, "Preaching Amid Pluralism: Elevating Christ in a culture that seeks all religions as equal," *Leadership Journal* (Winter 2002), 34-5.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Driscoll, "The Emerging Church and Biblical Theology," in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Jesus.”<sup>32</sup> Such orthodoxy has caused Driscoll to part ways with some other emerging leaders. In 1995 he began traveling around the country speaking for Leadership Network, out of which grew Emergent Village in 2001. Suspecting that its leaders wanted to revise orthodoxy, Driscoll separated and went another direction. He was right; Emergent Village leaders did begin to advocate an experimental, open approach to theology.<sup>33</sup>

But a middle stream of theology flows between the Reformed stream and the radical stream. For example, John Burke is a “practical theologian” at Gateway Community Church in Austin, Texas. He writes, “I must firmly anchor any emerging theology in the revealed Scriptures.”<sup>34</sup> He echoes Driscoll when he says, “One fear I have for the emerging church is that we will cut loose from the anchor of the authority of the Scriptures in hopes of relating to our relativistic culture.”<sup>35</sup> Yet Burke’s passion is that our theology leads us as Christian communities to serve hurting people with compassion. He states, “Honestly, I’m not interested in internal church debates about who has the right or wrong form of theology or Christian practice if the outcome doesn’t impact a hurting, broken world.”<sup>36</sup> However, a concern about Burke’s theology arises later in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, when in his response to Ward, he seems to be weak concerning salvation being exclusively through faith in Christ.<sup>37</sup> Dan Kimball serves as the pastor of Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California. Along with Burke, he also appears to belong in the middle stream of emerging church theology. He still considers himself to be a conservative evangelical, yet as an emerging church leader he says, “We must rethink leadership, church structure, the role of a pastor, spiritual formation, how community is lived out, how evangelism is done, how we express our worship, etc.”<sup>38</sup> Kimball wants the freedom to ask “dangerous questions” about Scripture and comes up with fewer answers

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>33</sup> Hansen, “Pastor Provocateur,” *Leadership*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> John Burke, “The Emerging Church and Incarnational Theology,” in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 52.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>37</sup> Karen Ward, “The Emerging Church and Communal Theology,” in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 189.

<sup>38</sup> Dan Kimball, “The Emerging Church and Missional Theology,” in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 86.

than he used to have. His theological certainty confines itself to the statements of the Nicene Creed. In his theological journey he has replaced his previous ideas of eschatology, women in ministry, and a number of other things with new ideas. Nevertheless, he is passionate about leading his people to do Bible study. However, he wants that Bible study to have an outward focus on ministering to the world. Therefore, he tells his congregation he wants them to be “missional theologians.”<sup>39</sup>

Pagitt represents the radical stream of emerging theology. His chapter in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches* flaunts orthodoxy. Coming from a thoroughly postmodern mindset, Pagitt states that theology is meant to be temporary and is always contextual. Since we are in an age of rapid change, we can expect our theology to be evolving and changing significantly. Evidently, Pagitt’s has. Once an evangelical, he now appears to be post-evangelical. Speaking with liberal terms, he says the church is not the center of God’s activity on the earth, the world is. So we should join him in his kingdom work in the world.<sup>40</sup> Pagitt says we need to change the way we understand truth and authority, and to “draw new conclusions about sexuality,” even considering “new ways of being sexual.”<sup>41</sup> Citing Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle and the fact that electrons can be explained as both wave and particle, Pagitt says we should be less certain about theology.<sup>42</sup> No wonder that in his response, Driscoll compares Pagitt and other radical emerging leaders to social gospel liberals, who err by equating change with progress.<sup>43</sup>

Brian McLaren joins Pagitt in the radical stream of emerging church theology. D. A. Carson considers him to be “the emerging church’s most influential thinker.”<sup>44</sup> Part of that influence stems from his surprising position as a regular columnist for the otherwise evangelical *Leadership Journal*. Influenced in part by David J. Bosch’s *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, McLaren agrees with Bosch that “The ‘old, old story’ may not be the true, true story, for we continue to grow, and even our discussion and dialogues contribute to such growth.”<sup>45</sup> Wishing to keep his position of influence among evangelicals,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 90-105.

<sup>40</sup> Doug Pagitt, “The Emerging Church and Embodied Theology,” in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (ed. Robert Webber, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 119-138.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 130-140.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 141-2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 144-7.

<sup>44</sup> D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 35.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 34.

McLaren is slippery in his theological responses. Carson reports that in answer to a question about the issue of homosexuality, “McLaren asserts that there is no good position, because all positions hurt someone, and that is always bad. Moreover, homosexuality may be seventy-five different things...it is not entirely clear that what we mean by homosexuality in any particular instance entirely lines up with what the Bible says about homosexuality.”<sup>46</sup> In a message entitled “Acceptance/Diversity” which was preached at the church he founded, McLaren speaks extensively about homosexuality with sympathy, but never ventures to state his own theological conclusions about it. He admits that he has those conclusions, but simply refuses to share them.<sup>47</sup>

McLaren is equally slippery on the subject of salvation. He writes, “Instead of ‘If you were to die tonight, do you know for certain that you would spend eternity with God in heaven?’ the new question seems to be, ‘If you live for another thirty years, what kind of person will you become?’”<sup>48</sup> In McLaren’s book, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, after a discussion of heaven, the ostensible author, Dan Poole, asks about those who reject the grace of God. McLaren’s character, Neo, responds, “Why do you always need to ask that question?...Isn’t what I just described to you enough?”<sup>49</sup> No, it is not enough, but in this subtle way McLaren tries to make us feel guilty for even asking him about hell.<sup>50</sup> Does McLaren believe that penal substitution happened in the atonement? Though not overt about his denial, McLaren endorsed *The Lost Message of Jesus* by Steve Chalke who writes, “the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father punishing his Son for an offense he has not even committed...If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.”<sup>51</sup> Carson responds, “I have to say it, as kindly but as forcefully as I can, that to my mind, if words mean anything, both McLaren and Chalke have largely abandoned the gospel.”<sup>52</sup> In his review of McLaren’s book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Al Mohler agrees. Speaking of McLaren, he says, “He claims to uphold,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 34-5.

<sup>47</sup> Brian McLaren, “Acceptance/Diversity,” sermon in the series, *Inside/Out: Living Out Our Values*, preached July 3, 2007 at Cedar Ridge Community Church, Spencerville, Maryland; Online at: [www.brianmclaren.net/archives/multimedia/podcasts](http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/multimedia/podcasts).

<sup>48</sup> Brian McLaren, “Emerging Values,” *Leadership*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Carson, *Becoming Conversant*, 168-9.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 186.

‘consistently, unequivocally, and unapologetically’ the historic creeds of the church, specifically the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. At the same time, however, he denies that truth should be articulated in propositional form, and thus undercuts his own ‘unequivocal’ affirmation.”<sup>53</sup> Mohler quotes McLaren, “People who try to label me an exclusivist, inclusivist, or universalist on the issue of hell will find here only more reasons for frustration.”<sup>54</sup> Thus McLaren is determined not to clearly articulate his views on salvation and thereby get caught and labeled as liberal.

One primary theological theme surfaces among all streams of emerging church thought—that theology and practice should be wed. Emerging leaders are justifiably reacting to an orthodox evangelical Western culture that has born too little spiritual fruit. Instead of functioning in true community, we largely isolate ourselves from each other. Typically, church members rarely appear in each other’s homes sitting at each other’s tables. Additionally, we too infrequently model Christ’s love by focusing on serving the needs of our community and our world. Instead, we too often focus on meeting our own needs and entertaining ourselves. We evangelicals would do well to listen to the emerging church by refocusing and restructuring to develop true community and missionality.

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<sup>53</sup> Al Mohler, review of *A Generous Orthodoxy*, by Brian D. McLaren, Posted April 23, 2006 [Cited 8 Nov. 2007]. Online: <http://galatiansc4v16.wordpress.com/2006/04/23/al-mohler%E2%80%99s-thoughtful-rev...>

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# THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO GOD'S LOVE AND WRATH

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## Abstract

The theory of the Spirit as the mutual-love of the Father and the Son is fairly standard in Western Christianity. Since the Spirit can be distinctively called the love of the Trinity, it becomes necessary to relate the conclusion that God's love and wrath are intimately connected. Therefore, God's wrath is often described as God's spurned love. This article investigates the claim that God's wrath is poured out on people by the Spirit. First the paper establishes Augustine's mutual-love theory and once the theory is in place, it moves to Martin Luther's understanding of the *opus proprium* and the *opus alienum* of God. After establishing Luther's thesis and then connecting it with Augustine's proposal it is possible to conclude the Spirit executes the judgment of the Son given to him by the Father upon those who refuse his salvation.

## Introduction

Stanley Grenz writes:

The Spirit's fundamental role within the divine life determines the role of the Spirit within the divine activity in the world. By being the bond between the Father and the Son, the Spirit completes the eternal immanent Trinity. In the same manner, the Spirit acts as the completer of the divine program in the world and hence the completer of the economic Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

He has adopted the postulate that the Spirit is the bond of mutual-love between the Father and the Son, and that this love, primarily encountered in the Spirit, is that which guides creation back to its Creator. In his systematic work he makes the further connection between love and wrath

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Grenz, "The Holy Spirit: Divine Love Guiding Us Home," *Ex Auditu* 12 (1996): 1.

when he states “those who undermine the love God pours forth for the world experience his love in the form of wrath.”<sup>2</sup> His position on both the Spirit as the mutual-love of the Father and the Son and on God’s wrath being how those who reject God experience his love clearly allows for the Spirit to have an active role in condemnation, but he never makes the connection within his writings. In order to undergird Grenz’s conclusions regarding the mutual-love theory and the love-wrath theory, an investigation will be made into each, with the intention at the end to synthesize the two ideas, as Grenz has done in his systematic work, but with the inclusion of the Spirit’s role in the synthesized scheme.

The Augustinian theory of the Spirit as the mutual-love of the Father and the Son is fairly well accepted in Western Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Since the Spirit can be distinctively called the love of the Trinity, it becomes necessary to relate the conclusion that God’s love and wrath are intimately connected, so much so that God’s wrath is often described as God’s spurned or rejected love. Wrath does not exist within the immanent Trinity, but comes into existence in relation to fallen humanity’s rejection of his love. If this love is the Spirit, then God’s wrath is intimately related to the Spirit.

In order to investigate the claim that God’s wrath is poured out on people by the Spirit, it will first be necessary to establish Augustine’s mutual-love theory. Once the theory is in place, then it will be necessary to move to Martin Luther’s understanding of the *opus proprium* and the *opus alienum* of God, or God’s proper and alien work.

After establishing Luther’s thesis and then connecting it with Augustine’s proposal, as Grenz has done, albeit not explicitly, in his systematic work, it will be possible to conclude that the Spirit is the person of the Trinity who actualizes God’s alien work to humanity, or to put it another way, the Spirit executes the judgment of the Son given to him by the Father upon those who refuse his offer of salvation.

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<sup>2</sup>Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 95.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, “The Holy Spirit as Communio: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine,” *Communio* 25 (1998): 324-37; Grenz, “The Holy Spirit,” 1-13; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 146-61; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:259-337; Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 37-40; David Coffey, “The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son,” *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 193-229.

### Mutual-Love Theory

Augustine begins his investigation of the Trinity by establishing the relationships between the persons of the Godhead. Within the Godhead, the only difference between each person is located in opposed relationships. The Father and the Son share the same essence with the only distinction being that the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. The very names of Father and Son contain within them the opposed relationship. One can say that the Son is the Son of the Father, or oppositely that the Father is the Father of the Son. However, when one speaks of the Holy Spirit he cannot make the same maneuver as regards opposed relations. The Spirit of the Father cannot be reversed to say the Father of the Spirit. The Father is only the Father of the Son, not the Spirit. Additionally, one can say the Spirit of the Son, but cannot reverse the order to say the Son of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Since the name "Holy Spirit" in itself does not contain an opposed relation, but in fact, is a combination of two attributes that are common to the Godhead, holiness and spirituality, Augustine argued that another term was needed to establish the opposition of the relationship that exists between the Father and the Spirit and the Son. While the name Holy Spirit is proper to the person of the Holy Spirit since he is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, the name itself can also be applied to all the members of the Godhead since God is Spirit according to John 4:24. Just as all the members of the Godhead are omnipotent, wise, and good, all the members are both spirit and holy, but the third person of the Trinity has been distinctively given the name Holy Spirit. Augustine writes that the "Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son, and perhaps he is given this name just because the same name can be applied to the Father and the Son."<sup>5</sup>

The first title for the Holy Spirit for which he argued was gift, seeing as both Acts 8:20 and John 4:10 describe the Spirit as a gift.<sup>6</sup> The Spirit

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<sup>4</sup>Augustine *De Trinitate* 5.13.13-16.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5.3.12

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5.3.12-16. Coffey correctly notes that nowhere in the Bible is the Spirit directly called 'gift', nor does it ever state directly that Christ gives the Spirit. While John 4:7-15 and Eph 4:7-8 are used by Augustine to support his claim for the Spirit as gift, neither passage unequivocally makes this assertion, and even if one accepts Augustine's interpretation, neither passage has the 'gift' being given by both the Father and the Son, but the Father only. The idea of the Spirit as the gift of the Father and the Son is built upon the *filioque* doctrine. While this is acceptable, it needs to be made clear that the Spirit as the 'gift of the Father and the Son is founded upon the *filioque* primarily, and then upon

is the gift of the Father and the Son, in as much as the Spirit proceeds from both of them.<sup>7</sup> If the Holy Spirit is understood as the gift of the Father and the Son, the first step to an opposed relationship is completed. While the Spirit as the gift of the Father and the Son was Augustine's first move to establish the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, he also argued that the Spirit is the mutual-love of the Father and the Son.<sup>8</sup>

Basing his conclusion on 1 John 4: 8-16, in which John stated that God is love, he argued that while the whole Trinity is indeed love, the Holy Spirit is rightly called the love of the Trinity. The love of God is

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certain Scriptures interpreted in its light. Coffey, "The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son," 196-98.

<sup>7</sup> The mutual-love theory of Augustine encouraged the Western addition of the *filioque*, in that the Spirit must proceed from both the Father and the Son in order to be the mutual-love of both, at least within Augustine's pattern. Wolfhart Pannenberg adopts the mutual-love theory of Augustine but in the process revolutionizes some of the classical formulations of Trinitarian theology. He does not follow the traditional path that sees the Trinity established under the monarchy of the Father, with relations of origin being the only distinguishing factors within the Godhead. Instead, each person in the Trinity is constituted by a web of relationships with the other members. Pannenberg contends that procession and generation reduce the Spirit and the Son to passive roles, while Scripture presents a more complicated picture as the Father generates the Son, but then hands over authority to him. The Son sends the Spirit, but it is the Spirit that completes the work of the Son. The monarchy of the Father is "not the presupposition, but the result of the common operation of the three persons. It is thus the seal of their unity." From this perspective, Pannenberg introduces the idea that the Spirit functions in the Trinity in a manner similar to a force field in physics. A force field manifests its power in the relations of particular objects within the field, while remaining autonomous from the objects. The force field is the divine essence in which the Three participate, but a field is impersonal. Therefore, the Spirit is both a person in the Godhead and the force field that holds the Three together since both the essence of divinity and the person of the Holy Spirit are understood by Pannenberg as uniting love. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:317-84. While Pannenberg's innovative Trinitarian theology causes many problems, it is presented here, not as an endorsement of his position, but instead to show that even in the absence of an acceptance of the *filioque*, the idea of the Spirit as mutual love can still be supported. For a critique of Pannenberg's Trinitarian scheme see Anselm Kyongsuk Min, "The Dialectic of Divine Love: Pannenberg's Hegelian Trinitarianism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (2004): 252-69.

<sup>8</sup>"What is meant is that while in that supremely simple nature substance is not one thing and charity another, but substance is charity and charity is substance, whether in the Father or in the Son or in the Spirit, yet all the same the Holy Spirit is distinctively named charity." *Ibid.*, 15.5.29.

both the very nature of God and that which God gives to humanity. Love is both God and from God, but according to Augustine "the Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God, and thus the love which is God in such a way that it is from God must be either the Son or the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> 1 John 4:12 reveals that if believers love each other then God abides in them and his love is perfected or completed in them. His abiding is evidenced by the love that they show for each other. The reciprocity of love between believers is nothing other than the reciprocity of God himself between them.<sup>10</sup> In this way, believers are able to experience the fullness of God's communion with them. In v. 13, John revealed that believers can know God is abiding in them and they are abiding in God, in that he has given the believers his Holy Spirit. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the community, both individually and corporately, that was the sign and seal that they were abiding in God and that God's love was abiding in them. Since love is God's very nature, and the believers received confirmation of God's love abiding in them through the Spirit's abiding in them, Augustine concluded that the Spirit was the love of God indwelling and abiding within the believers and bringing their communion to completion.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, Augustine employed Romans 5:5 as further evidence for the mutual-love theory. Paul was encouraging his readers to endure in the face of suffering and persecution because God was using the situation to produce hope in their lives. If they held on to this hope, they would not be put to shame because God's love had been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> He is the guarantee of the Father's promises to his people, and therefore, his presence in the believers' lives guaranteed the hope upon which they rested. It is in the Spirit that God's love is poured into the believers' hearts, but God's love is nothing other than the Spirit who is poured out on all flesh. God's love and Spirit function in the same capacity, to induce hope in the lives of believers and to solidify the hope produced. When God pours out his love, he pours out nothing other than his own self, and this is done through the Spirit in as much as he is the mutual-love of the Father and the Son.<sup>13</sup><sup>14</sup>The Spirit as the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 15.5.31.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 15.5.31."So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love."

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 15.5.31.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 15.5.31.

<sup>13</sup> Although Douglas Moo does not comment upon the mutual-love theory in his commentary he does make the connection that Paul uses the same verb for 'poured out' to refer to God's love in Rom 5:5 and the Spirit in Titus 3:6. He then entertains the idea that the subject of Rom 5:5 might be the Holy Spirit

mutual-love of the Father and the Son is a well-established axiom within Trinitarian theology. The axiom does not seek to prove that the Father and the Son do not also love, but only to relate how the Spirit relates to the other two members of the Godhead in the immanent Trinity. As the Son proceeds from the Father by generation, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son by procession, he is the love that the Father and Son share together. In the economic Trinity it is in, by, and through the Holy Spirit that humanity is able to encounter and experience God's love. This statement holds true even if one rejects the mutual-love theory, as is attested by Romans 5:5. Having established that humanity experiences God's love in, by, and through the Spirit, it is possible to advance to the discussion of the relationship between God's love and wrath.

### **The Love-Wrath Theory**

A God without wrath, without displeasure at the corruption and bondage of his creation, is one without love for that same creation. It is because of his deep love for creation, and humanity in particular, that his wrath is aroused against the sin and rebellion that plagues it. God's wrath is not to be equated with human wrath, as if the two were identical. There is a similarity between the two so that one is able to use the same word for both, but one must also be aware of the infinite qualitative distinction between God's and humanity's wrath.

God's holiness and love working in conjunction call forth his wrath. If he were not holy, then humanity's rebellion would not offend him. He would have no problem with those who choose to disobey him, since he would not have a standard to which to hold humanity accountable. Secondly, if he did not love his creation, then sin would not arouse his

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himself, but concludes that the love of God is the subject. However, God's love "is conveyed to our sensations by the Holy Spirit, who resides in every believer." Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 304-05. Even if, as Moo argues, the subject in the verse is God's love and not the Spirit, it is only in the Spirit that the love can be experienced by humanity, and therefore, the basic contention of the mutual-love theory in the economy is maintained.

<sup>14</sup>"The particularity of the Holy Spirit is evidently that he is what the Father and Son have in common. His particularity is being unity. The general name 'Holy Spirit' is the most appropriate way to express him in the paradox characteristic of him – mutuality itself." Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*," 326.

wrath because he would be indifferent to what his creation did. However, God is holy and God is love.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, when his creation turns its back on him and attempts to find its good in some place other than him, his wrath is aroused against the offense. Sin is not the breaking of an impersonal law passed by a distant legislator, but is instead the rejection of God himself, and this rejection is none other than the rejection of all that is good and right. When a person seeks to find completion and wholeness outside of God, he is seeking for that which is only found in him. By his very nature, God reaches out in love to the world, to bring the world back into a proper relationship with him so that it can find its completion. This reaching out in love, however, does not overlook the reality that humanity has gone its own way, has turned its back on its Creator, and has therefore violated his holiness.

From the foregoing discussion of God's love and holiness, it would seem that God is trapped in a dilemma regarding humanity. His holiness will not allow people off the hook for their sin, but his love will not abandon them to the hook upon which they have impaled themselves. The answer to the dilemma is not found in deep philosophical speculation over his nature, but instead is found in the historical revelation of God on the cross.<sup>16</sup> It is on the cross that his wrath and love meet, with love breaking through wrath to reveal that wrath is not an immanent attribute of God, but is called forth in reaction to humanity's rebellion.<sup>17</sup> God is love, but he displays wrath. The tension between God's love and wrath has been dealt with in numerous ways, from the facile assumption that he has no wrath, through the universalistic assumption that although he has wrath, it has a purificatory effect upon

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<sup>15</sup>Lev 11:45 and 1 John 4:8.

<sup>16</sup>Human reason cannot determine whether or not God is love or wrath. It is only in the revelation that God gives of himself that a correct interpretation of creation can be made. It is only by faith in Christ that a person can know that God's love overcomes his wrath. On the cross, God's wrath and love meet, but in the meeting, God's love prevails over his wrath and provides a means whereby fallen humanity can return home. The truth of the previous statement is not attainable by human reason, for to human reason, the cross is nothing other than wrath and defeat. If the cross speaks to fallen humanity at all, it can only declare the absence of God. It is only through the eyes of faith that one can see the objective reality of God's nature. It is only through the eyes of faith that a person understands the cross as both wrath and love. It is only through the eyes of faith that one sees how God's love breaks through his wrath to redeem his creation. Egil Grisliis, "Luther's Understanding of the Wrath of God," *Journal of Religion* 41 (1961): 284-86.

<sup>17</sup>Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1934), 515-35.

creation so that eventually wrath will cease as creation *in toto* returns to him, all the way to the more sophisticated, albeit equally as disastrous claim that his wrath is nothing more than the natural outworking of cause and effect in a moral universe.

The question remains how adequately to correlate God's love and wrath, how to explain that while God is love, he does, in reality, have wrath towards those elements within creation that stand in opposition to him. The path to reconciling his love and wrath will pass first through Martin Luther's assessment of the *opus proprium Dei* and the *opus alienum Dei*, and after explicating Luther's understanding between redemption and condemnation, the journey will quickly pass through a study of several modern theologians who have adopted Luther's axiom, often in modified form, to elucidate the relationship between love and wrath. Finally, the journey will end where it began, at Stanley Grenz, who will serve as the paradigm of those who equate God's love and wrath. From his equation of God's love-wrath and his acceptance of Augustine's mutual-love theory, it will be possible to say what Grenz has hinted at, but failed to say, about the relationship between the Holy Spirit and wrath.

Luther recognized the truth of the claim that sin strikes at the very person of God, because God is love and righteousness, and sin injures and insults righteousness.<sup>18</sup> Luther writes, "He (God) is not only justice but also love of justice; and whoever loves justice, receives it from Him. It would not be sin if it did not offend God."<sup>19</sup> Sin as an attack on God's very person necessitates a response in him that will not allow sin to stake a claim to legitimacy, since there is only one true God, and all others are mere idols. His jealousy to protect his status as God is not motivated from fear, but from love. To establish anything other than the one true God as God is to embrace the lesser over the greater. God is the greatest possible good for creation and when something lesser is chosen, God, in his love, must react in wrath against that choice. His wrath is "coextensive with his majesty; like God himself, it is eternal, omnipotent, and infinite."<sup>20</sup> Luther, however, did not understand God's

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<sup>18</sup>For an overview of the various positions regarding Luther's understanding of God's wrath see Grislis, "Luther's Understanding of the Wrath of God," 277-88.

<sup>19</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 14:316.

<sup>20</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 169. Althaus makes this claim from a statement of Luther's on Psalm 90. Luther is arguing that in evangelism, one must approach the hardened, smug sinner with the reality of God's wrath, but for the person who has already been terrified, who no longer imagines that there

wrath as an essential part of his nature, but instead argued that wrath is the subjective experience of the person who stands in opposition to him.<sup>21</sup> He contended that God's "compassion is more abundant because it is part of God's nature, since wrath is truly God's alien work, in which He engages contrary to His nature, because He is forced into it by the wickedness of man."<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that his wrath is not real, but it is to say that his wrath is not the final reality. There is a dialectic between wrath and grace, law and gospel, and the dividing line between the two is found in Christ. For those outside of Christ, God's wrath is a reality, but for those in Christ, his wrath is nothing other than his mercy, and his punishment is discipline, not condemnation.<sup>23</sup> In Christ, God has reconciled his wrath towards humanity; therefore, he is able both to justify sinners, and to remain just in the process.<sup>24</sup>

The transition from God's wrath to his love is not made through an intellectual enterprise, as if one need merely come to realize that God does not have any wrath at all, as if one needed only to think correctly about him, but is instead made through a radical commitment of trust.<sup>25</sup>

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is a safe place to hid from God, one needs to show God's grace and love, to show that "God is not an enraged demon, but the true God Himself, who is Lord of all things." From the understanding of God as infinite, two things are learned, one is that his grace and love is infinite towards those who fear and love him, while at the same time his wrath is infinite towards those who remain in their smug rejection of God. "For the effect is always commensurate with the magnitude of the efficient cause." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. Paul M. Bretscher (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 13:93.

<sup>21</sup>"For faith leads you up and opens up the heart and will of God for you. There you see sheer, superabundant grace and love. . . Anyone who regards Him as angry is not seeing Him correctly, but has pulled down a curtain and cover, more, a dark cloud over his face. But in Scriptural language 'to see His face' means to recognize Him correctly as a gracious and faithful Father." Luther, *Luther's Works*, 13:37.

<sup>22</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 2:134.

<sup>23</sup>Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 171.

<sup>24</sup>Rom 3:26.

<sup>25</sup>The fatal flaw of the Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement, and all such theories, is that it understands God's wrath as only a misunderstanding of God on humanity's part, with no objective basis for the reality in God. According to proponents of the Moral Influence Theory, what humanity needs is not to be reconciled, but re-educated. There is no retributive need in God, either in his own nature or his law, which requires some form of sacrifice or propitiation to be made in order for him to forgive humanity. God is already reconciled with humanity through his love. What is needed is a means whereby humanity can be enlightened, educated, or persuaded of the love of God. Samuel

the wrath of God is only removed in Christ, and entry into the sphere of Christ's existence, into the body of Christ, is only gained by faith in Christ. This is a faith that encounters God's wrath, breaks through that wrath by Christ's absorption and defeat of it in the cross and resurrection, and subsequently stands in God's presence recognizing that he is indeed love, not wrath, in his essential being.

Numerous theologians from a wide spectrum of belief have understood God's love and wrath as the other side of the same coin. In order to make the coin analogy work concerning the nature of God, however, one needs to be clear that in the immanent Trinity there is only one side of the coin and that is love, while in the economic Trinity the one-sided coin of love is manifested as two-sided due to sin. It might be helpful to highlight a selection of theologians who have adopted the postulate that God's wrath is the obverse of his love. Of course, not all the theologians mentioned use the idea with the same meaning, and thus, it will be necessary to clarify their presuppositions to understand fully what is meant by the relationship between love and wrath. The question hinges upon how the person understands the nature of wrath, is it an objective aspect of God, or is it only a subjective experience of the person? As already demonstrated, Brunner adopts Luther's postulate about the love and wrath of God when he states, "God is present in this anger, it is actually *His* anger. For God is not mocked. That something has been interposed between God and man objectively, not merely subjectively in the consciousness of man, is thus not a pagan idea, but it is the view of the Christian Bible itself."<sup>26</sup> Brunner is clear that God's wrath objectively encounters humanity. R. P. C. Hanson writes that "wrath is the converse, the under side, of God's love. It accompanies love, as darkness accompanies light, if you reject light you must have darkness."<sup>27</sup> In contradiction to Brunner, however, Hanson argues that "wrath is carefully treated as something ordained and controlled by God indeed, but distinct from him."<sup>28</sup> God's wrath is not an objective reality imposed between himself and humanity, but instead is the absence of the experience of God's love. J. W. Wenham describes

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Wyatt Driggers, "Development of the Moral Influence of the Atonement" (Ph. D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1934), 20-32. This is not what Luther was declaring, but instead that wrath is an objective reality for the person under it. Wrath, however, is not the final reality. The final reality is that God is love. For the person who refuses to accept this truth about God, on God's terms, not the person's, then God's love is experienced as wrath and condemnation, God's *opus alienum*.

<sup>26</sup>Brunner, *The Mediator*, 518.

<sup>27</sup>Hanson, *God*, 47.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 46.

God's wrath as "the obverse of the love of God, it is love rejected."<sup>29</sup> James Stewart declares, "God's wrath is God's grace. It is his grace smitten with dreadful sorrow. It is His love in agony."<sup>30</sup> According to J. Arthur Baird, "wrath is the antithesis of love. It is God's reaction to man's rebellion against his sovereignty. It is a broken fellowship. It is God's confirmation of a man's self-rejection. In effect, God's wrath is his rejected grace. As such, it is an indivisible part of his love."<sup>31</sup>

As already demonstrated, another theologian who adopts Luther's distinction is Stanley Grenz. He maintains that love is the very essence of God. He is love apart from creation, and therefore, "God is love is the foundational ontological statement we can declare concerning the divine essence. God is foundationally the mutuality of the love relationship between the Father and the Son, and this personal love is the Holy Spirit."<sup>32</sup>

True love will jealously defend the love relationship in which it exists. Thus, a husband is rightly jealous that his wife belongs to no other man. Love will not allow outside intruders into the relationship. From this assertion, one can understand that God is a "jealous, wrathful God. Those who would undermine the love God pours forth for the world experience his love in the form of wrath." From another angle, Grenz suggests that when people choose to reject the good and refuse to

<sup>29</sup>John William Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 69. While Wenham is not clear on the issue, it appears that he holds to the objective nature of God's wrath.

<sup>30</sup>Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, 221. Stewart's conception of wrath does not match Brunner's. For Stewart, God's wrath is nothing more than humanity's self-punishment for not accepting the good. This is similar in conception to C. H. Dodd's thesis that wrath is simply the natural outworking of sin in a moral universe. God is not directly involved in the result.

<sup>31</sup>Baird, *The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus*, 72. Baird makes reference to Stewart's conception of wrath as God's love in agony, but Baird does not hold to the distinction between God and wrath that Stewart maintains.

<sup>32</sup>Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 93. While Grenz does not depreciate the holiness of God, he rejects the move of a theologian such as James Leo Garrett who elevates the holiness of God to the position of being a fundamental attribute on par with God's love. He argues that the intention of elevating God's holiness is to justify God's prerogative in condemning people to hell. God must be holy in order to accommodate the biblical evidence for condemnation. Grenz believes, however, that holiness, by its nature, is contained within the concept of love. Ultimately, the debate is academic, as both arguments arrive at the same location in relation to God's love and wrath. Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 2:239-46; Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 94.

become that for which God intended them, “they remain the recipients of God’s love, but experience that love in the form of wrath.”<sup>33</sup> From this, Grenz concludes that hell is nothing other than the eternal experience of the rejection of God’s love.

### **A Synthesis of the Two Theories**

It is now possible to combine the mutual-love and the love-wrath theories in order to explicate the Spirit’s relationship to God’s wrath. From the outset, it needs to be maintained that God’s wrath is not the same thing as the final judgment. Paul clearly shows in Ephesians 2:3 that believers were at one time children of wrath. God’s wrath stands in opposition to all that is opposed to him, and while this wrath has an eschatological perspective, in that all temporality gains its bearing from the eschaton, it is not solely an eschatological phenomenon. God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness. The reason for making this distinction becomes clear when one examines the issue of soteriology.

It is in the salvation event that a person passes from under God’s wrath and comes into the final reality that is his love. If the Spirit is indeed the mutual-love of the Father and the Son, and God’s wrath is the reverse side of his love, then in truth, when a person is transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, when a person is saved, he moves from under God’s wrath as experienced through the Holy Spirit into his love as experienced through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not change in the transfer, but the person’s relationship to God as

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 95. William Crockett argues that God does not love those who are in hell. His article is not directly related to the issue of God’s love, but is arguing that Paul was a Particularist, not a Universalist. Part of his argument rests upon the postulate that at some point God must stop loving a person in order for that person to remain in hell. It would seem that his conclusion is that God’s love is reformatory, and if God did not remove his love then the person would of necessity have to be released from hell. Of course, this raises the problem as to whether God ever loved the person. If God loved the person for a time, was his love not reformatory in that instance? Additionally, Crockett defines God’s love as his “merciful acts in history.” Love is action, not feelings. Once again, Crockett fails to answer the question about God’s love for the individual before death. If God loves a person before death, but does nothing to save the person, where is the action on God’s part? While Crockett is correct that Paul was a Particularist, the reason is not that God ceases to love those in hell, but because those in hell have never responded to God’s love. William V. Crockett, "Wrath That Endures Forever," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991): 195-202.

experienced by him in the Spirit is changed. Furthermore, it is in the Spirit's power that a person is able to accept Christ's work on the cross as the payment for his own sin. When a person accepts Christ's bearing of God's wrath on the cross he is transformed into a new creation, life springs into existence from death. This coming to life, this recognizing of God's love behind, beneath, and within his wrath, is accomplished by the very Spirit under whom the person experiences both the wrath, which is truly God's wrath, but not his final reality; and the love, which is truly God's love, and is indeed the final reality of God. God is love, but has wrath towards sinful humanity. The Spirit is love, but has wrath towards sinful humanity, in as much as sinful humanity remains in its sin.

"God is an eternal lover," and as such, God loves his creation eternally.<sup>34</sup> Those who reject that love relationship experience the "dark side" of God's love.<sup>35</sup> While Grenz gets this part of the equation correct, he fails to follow through on his own implications and ascribe the "dark side" of God's love to the bright side of his love. Both are experiences of the Spirit, who is the unifying love of God. Nevertheless, even if someone were to reject the mutual-love theory of Augustine, he would not by that move remove the Spirit from participating in judgment, for Romans 5:5 states that the love of God is poured into people's hearts through the Holy Spirit. According to this verse, the Spirit is the person in whom people experience the love of the entire Godhead. Conversely, if God's wrath is the flipside of his love, then the flipside it would stand to reason is experienced in the Holy Spirit as well.

Stanley Grenz serves as a perfect representative of the church's unwillingness to ascribe the judgmental aspects of God's nature to the Spirit. Grenz makes all the connections in his systematic work that are necessary to show that the Spirit is the channel for both God's love and wrath, but only follows through on explicitly stating that the Spirit is his love. Either he refuses to declare the Spirit as God's wrath, or it never occurred to him to connect the dots he established. Either way, the Spirit's role in judgment is more clearly elucidated when one is able to see the unified nature of both the immanent Trinity's love as manifested and bonded in the Spirit and of God's love and wrath as it is encountered by both the redeemed and unredeemed. In the combination of the mutual-love theory and the love-wrath theory one is able to more clearly see the role of the Holy Spirit in judgment.

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<sup>34</sup>Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 836.

<sup>35</sup>"God's love has a dark side. Those who spurn or seek to destroy the holy love relationship God desires to enjoy with creation experience the divine love as protective jealousy or wrath. Because God is eternal, our experience of God's love – whether as fellowship or as wrath – is also eternal." Ibid.

# THE RELEVANCE OF THE SABBATH

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## Abstract

Christians treat the commandment concerning the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8 as somehow less binding than the other nine commandments. This article explores the nature of the commandment to remember the Sabbath and its role in the life of the modern believer.

## Introduction

What is the Sabbath? Most Christians associate the word with one of the two things: an archaic Jewish holiday or the Christian Sunday. If it is thought of as particularly Jewish, the Sabbath is relegated to the category of the unimportant. If, on the other hand, the Sabbath is categorized as the Christian Sunday, then it is viewed as a day of leisure or a time to catch up on the ever-pressing work load. Many Christians aren't sure what to do with "Sabbath." They struggle with it and wonder whether or not it is strictly an Old Testament convention. Most of us would not hesitate to affirm that the Decalogue is a normative ethical code for the church today, yet when it comes to the fourth commandment on keeping the Sabbath, we somehow manage to ignore it. Why? This study will attempt to examine the institution of the Sabbath, as well as its nature and the need to practice it today.<sup>1</sup>

## Analysis

The Sabbath was instituted by God as part of the creation (Genesis 3:2). The first mention of the word Sabbath is found in Exodus 16:23ff. The word means "to be still, to cease", and is representative of what God did

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<sup>1</sup> Before we begin, it is important that we outline the scope and method of this project. The size of this project curtails its depth and extent. Attention will be paid to the Scriptures, but with our specific purpose in mind. Likewise, use of secondary sources is made, but with a purpose. For example, it is not the function of this project to do an in-depth study of the difference between the Lord's Day and the Sabbath. As with any study, the subjective opinions of the author enter in to the process and conclusions and it is therefore our hope that the reader will do further reading and come to his/her own conclusions.

in Genesis 3:2. According to *Genesis Rabbah*, a rabbinical commentary on Genesis, God did create on the Sabbath day: He created serenity, peace, and repose.<sup>2</sup> This was done because the Creator knew that work alone is not sufficient for human fulfillment.<sup>3</sup> The Sabbath, then, was designed for mankind, the created being. A. J. Heschel has said, "The love of the Sabbath is the love of man for what he and God have in common."<sup>4</sup> Observance of the Sabbath, then, is a loving response to God.

The importance of the Sabbath was reconfirmed at Sinai with the giving of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 20:8ff, the Israelites were commanded to "remember" the Sabbath. The fact that they were to remember it indicates that this institution did indeed exist before Moses and that this was not a new "rule" for them.<sup>5</sup> The word "remember" also points to the exodus, which represented a type of the Sabbath in that it was liberation and freedom from slavery. Thus, the Sabbath came to be tied to both the emancipation from Egypt as well as the creation of all things.<sup>6</sup> These links meant that the Sabbath also came to be viewed as a symbol of eschatological hope.<sup>7</sup>

Remembering the Sabbath involved "observing" the day (Deuteronomy 5:12ff). This meant ceasing from work (Exodus 34:21). It required stillness before God (Psalm 46:10). It entailed preparing for the day as sacred time. The Sabbath was the seventh day, a specific period of each week, which was to be set aside and kept holy. Solomon Goldman explains: "Keeping the Sabbath, therefore, is in the nature of an act of worship, a sacrament. One sanctifies the Sabbath by *observing it*" (italics mine).<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, observing the Sabbath is an acknowledgement of God as both the Creator and the Lord of History.<sup>9</sup>

The import of Sabbath observance is further strengthened through several events in Scripture which point to its significance. In Exodus 16:27ff, God declares His displeasure with the fact that the Israelites continue to look for manna on the seventh day of the week. Clearly they miss the point that God would provide! Likewise, in Exodus 31:14ff and Numbers 15:34-36, the death penalty is issued for anyone who breaks the

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<sup>2</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* 10:9

<sup>3</sup> Tilden Edwards. *Sabbath Time: Understanding and Practice for Contemporary Christians*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *The Earth is the Lord's and The Sabbath*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Platt. "Day of Praise, Joy and Freedom." *The Lord's Day*. J.P. Wesberry ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards, T, pp. 12-13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon Goldman. *A Guide to the Sabbath*. (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1961), p.7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

Sabbath by working on that day. This certainly testifies to the significance of the Sabbath in God's view. Additional warnings to observe the Sabbath are found in Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15 and Jeremiah 17:27. Finally, in Ezekiel 20:13 and 22:8, God declares that the people have despised "my Sabbaths." This affirms that the Sabbath belongs to the Lord and must be treated with reverence.

But what is the nature and purpose of the Sabbath? It is perhaps best described by the prophet Isaiah. In 56:2, we find that keeping the Sabbath is synonymous with maintaining justice and keeping one's hand from evil. Then in 58:13-14, there is the restriction on selfish desire and the encouragement to delight in and to honor the "Lord's holy day." In keeping with this theme, A. J. Heschel indicates that the Sabbath day "is a day of praise, not a day of petitions."<sup>10</sup> It entails peace with all things and a focus on the Creator. This day is a necessary part of the rhythm of life.

Since it is only a part of life and not the whole of it, the Sabbath does not deny the validity of work. Again A. J. Heschel is insightful: "Labor is not only the destiny of man; it is endowed with divine dignity."<sup>11</sup> The Sabbath is meant to be different from the other six days in that work is not done on it. In the Jewish understanding, the Sabbath was to be welcomed as a bride would be by a groom. No one would expect a groom to work on his wedding day!<sup>12</sup> This means that the Sabbath represents freedom from the things that bind us during the other six days of the week. It is with this understanding that Jesus made his declaration in Mark 2:27: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Ultimately, the intent and focus of the Sabbath is a rest that reflects the image and love of God.

The nature of the Sabbath rest is debated. Is the promise of rest fulfilled when the Israelites settled the land of Canaan (Judges 1:6-8) or is there a more permanent rest to come? Leon Morris feels that Israel failed to enter into the rest of God which is typified by the Sabbath.<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 3:17-4:13 is helpful at this point in making two things clear. First, the rest which is in question, whether Sabbath rest or a more general form, is the sole property of God. In 3:18, the author attributes the idea of rest to God and in 4:3 God is quoted as speaking of "my rest."<sup>14</sup> Second, the passage tells us that faith and rest are integrally tied together. Thus, the sons of Israel did obtain the rest that came from

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<sup>10</sup> A. J. Heschel, *The Sabbath*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1979), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris. *Hebrews*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> This is undoubtedly tied to the fact that the Sabbath also belonged to God. See Ezekiel 20:13 and 22:8

having physical security and a place to call home, but they failed to maintain consistent faith in the One to whom rest belonged. The point of the author of Hebrews is that the offer of Sabbath rest and permanent rest is still open to those who believe in Christ. Jesus confirmed this with His claim to be able to give rest in Matthew 11:28-30.<sup>15</sup>

Since this rest is still open to those who believe, does that imply that the command to remember the Sabbath is normative for Christians? Some would say so. A. A. Hodge feels that the Sabbath deserves perpetual, universal observances because it was instated at creation.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, G. Holder views the Sabbath as binding upon *all* men because of its presence from the very beginning.<sup>17</sup> John Calvin also believed that the Sabbath was still in effect, but that recreation on the Sabbath was permissible.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, it has been noted that the Sabbath is one of the ethical laws because of its presence in the Decalogue. This places the obligation to “remember the Sabbath and keep it holy” in the same category as not committing murder.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, others would say that the Sabbath is not binding on the Christian. P. Cotton, for example, states that the Pauline view is that the Sabbath is not binding upon the Gentile.<sup>20</sup> In fact, he feels that this was the very reason that the church celebrated worship on Sunday instead of Saturday: in order to sweep away the burdensome restrictions of the Sabbath laws and to celebrate only those things which were good about the Sabbath.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, J. S. Porter held that “it is quite manifest that the Fourth Commandment, as it stands in the Law of Moses, cannot bind us because we are Gentiles...Neither Jesus nor the apostles imposed the Sabbath on us.”<sup>22</sup> Historically, the Ante-Nicene church father Tertullian held that the legal observance of Sabbath was not required.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Rest is tied intricately to the concept of peace via a faith and assurance in Christ. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into this aspect of rest but see the helpful article, “The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. (April, 1973) p. 139ff.

<sup>16</sup> *The Day Changed and the Sabbath Preserved*. (Philadelphia: Committee on Christian Education), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> George Holder. *The Christian Sabbath*. (London: C.&J. Rivington, 1825), p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Paul K. Jewett. *The Lord's Day*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 28, 29.

<sup>20</sup> *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Study in Early Christianity*. (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1933), p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*. p. 160.

<sup>22</sup> J. S. Porter, *Christ's Dominion over the Sabbath Asserted: A Discourse on Mark 2:27-28*. (Belfast: Henry Greer, 1856), pp. 7, 19. This seems based on the hermeneutical idea that in order for an Old Testament instruction to be viable for Christians, it must be explicitly endorsed within the New Testament.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth A. Strand. *The Early Christian Sabbath: Selected Essays and a Source Collection*. (Worthington, OH: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), p. 25.

Even Martin Luther believed that the New Testament had abrogated the Sabbath and that there was no one day that was better than another.<sup>24</sup>

Given the differing Christian interpretations, can we reach a conclusion? It is helpful to look at how Jesus treated the Sabbath. It is often believed, based on Jesus' conflict with, and defiance of the pharisaical Sabbath regulations, that He nullified Sabbath observance. This is not the case. Jesus was rejecting what the Pharisees had done to the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath itself. C.B. Haynes describes the situation well: "They [the Jews] built around the Sabbath hundreds of man-made laws in the hope of so protecting it from desecration that it would become impossible for the nation ever to be taken into captivity again."<sup>25</sup> Jesus was reacting to their failure to internalize the spirit of the Law. Tractate Shabbat of the Babylonian Talmud testifies to this failure. It even has instructions about not placing an egg too close to the stove for fear of cooking it and thereby being guilty of having done work on the Sabbath.<sup>26</sup> The Sabbath had gone from a divine provision for the people to an institution protected by the people.<sup>27</sup> The result was Jesus' reaction in Mark 2:27. Jesus consistently taught that the needs of man should be preeminent.<sup>28</sup> It was for this reason that he taught and healed on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2, Matthew 12:12, John 7:23, 9:14, Luke 13:10-17). Paul followed this example (Acts 17:2, 18:4).

Christ did not nullify the Sabbath but rather fulfilled it by living it out in spirit. However, Jesus is the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Luke 6:5, Matthew 12:1-8) and it belongs to him. Therefore, is His relationship to the Sabbath different from ours? Paul addresses the question more directly. In Colossians 2:16ff he describes the Sabbath outlined in the Old Testament as a shadow of things to come. It has found its "reality" in Christ (verse 17). Again, this indicates fulfillment. The end result is that the Sabbath is, in some sense, still operational through Christ. It is the ethical and moral aspect of the Sabbath that still stand as normative. Rest is still available and it still comes from dependence upon God. The legal minutia has been fulfilled once and for all by Jesus.

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<sup>24</sup> Edwards, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> *The Christian Sabbath: Is it Saturday or Sunday?* (Nashville: Southern Publishers Assc.), 1949. p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud. Sabbath* 38b.

<sup>27</sup> G. Weldon Gaddy. "Sabbath Rest." *The Way of Faith: Words of Admonition and Encouragement for the Journey Based on the Letter to the Hebrews*. J.M. Pitts ed. (Wake Forest, NC: Chanticleer Publishing Co., 1983), p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> Cotton, p. 30.

## Application

If then the Sabbath is ethically normative, how and why should the Christian apply it to contemporary life? After all, everyone has more than enough work to fill eight days a week! Ironically, our society is such that it has eroded the very thing it needs—Sabbath rest! Edwards gives four contributing factors to this erosion: American pluralism, individualism, changing views of time, and devaluation of the contemplative.<sup>29</sup> Out of these four, individualism is the most significant in that it incorporates aspects of the others. Individualism by its very nature includes a non-historical sense of time as well as a lack of commonality with others. For example, the author can remember a call to reform the “blue laws” in the state of Massachusetts. This reform allowed all stores to be open seven days a week. This measure, and those similar to it across the United States, meant that there is now virtually no difference among the days of the week for many people in our society. Time increasingly becomes a blur and our contact with each other becomes minimal.

This change demonstrates a clear need for the counter-cultural Sabbath. As W.G. Plaut has pointed out, we need the Sabbath as a rest from the unrest that pervades our society.<sup>30</sup> Keeping a repetitive, consistent Sabbath also encourages rest more than an isolated vacation. Plaut goes so far as to call the Sabbath a protest against the endless goalless competition inherent in our society.<sup>31</sup> Ceasing from our work on a regular basis shows our mastery over it and forces us to acknowledge our dependence on our Creator for our needs. It is a break in the humdrum which allows us to disentangle ourselves from our culture and reorient on our identity as servants of Christ. As A. J. Heschel writes, “The Sabbath is the day on which we learn the art of surpassing civilization.”<sup>32</sup>

This is not to imply that the freedom that comes with Sabbath does so passively. On the contrary, welcoming Sabbath involves activity. For example, in the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath is welcomed as a bride, a symbol of the special quality of the day.<sup>33</sup> This activity is participation in Sabbath rest as worship, which incorporates our whole being. This worship involves community. Sabbath reminds us that we are a part of the creation and the body of Christ. Sabbath is worship of God with our

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<sup>29</sup> Edwards, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> “The Sabbath as Protest: Thoughts on Work and Leisure in the Automated Society.” *Tradition and Change in Jewish Experience*. A.L. Jamison ed. (New York: Syracuse University, 1978), p. 177.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175ff.

<sup>32</sup> Heschel, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel H. Dresner. *The Sabbath*. (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1970), p. 17ff.

whole being in unity with all of creation. This worship should include the study of God's word. Furthermore, we must cease from our anxiety (Psalms 46:10). The Sabbath teaches us to depend on God in all things and therein lays freedom and peace. It frees us from the endless pressure of trying to produce and from being measured by our accomplishments.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, it is not the absence of activity but what is done that makes the day holy.

It should be remembered that like Israel, we were not picked for our accomplishments. The Sabbath reminds us to share the love of God with others, to see them for who they are and not for what they have accomplished.<sup>35</sup> Sabbath is, after all, a reflection of our faith in and love for God. A lack of these elements in our lives could very well bar us from entering into the rest of God which has been prepared from the foundation of the world.

Ultimately, one should recognize that the Sabbath does belong to Almighty God and that, in itself, makes it worthy of observance. However, as Jesus stated, the Day was made for man as part of the creation. Karl Barth asked the question, "How are things in your heart?"<sup>36</sup> To enter into Sabbath rest is to be still in your heart and know that the Lord is God and to love and depend on Him. Sabbath observance is an intentional act of faith in God's past actions that manifests in our current behavior. It demonstrates a desire and hope for a time when God's true rest will become normative for all time.

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<sup>34</sup> Marva J. Dawn. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Frances R. McCormick. "Sabbath Rest: A Theological Imperative According to Karl Barth." *Journal of American Academy of Religion.* Vol. LXII. No. 2. p. 539.

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## Book Reviews

*Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell.* By David Torbett. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006, 230 pp., \$49.95 hardcover.

The impact one's theology has upon his view of ethical questions is highly significant in an age of embryonic stem cell research, illegal immigration and constantly changing medical technology. *Theology and Slavery* examines the impact of two of the nineteenth century's greatest theologians on the burning issue of their day, slavery.

Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell held very different views of Scripture and epistemology. These views affected their approach to the issues of slavery and race. Torbett examines their approaches based on specific criteria; theological approach, normative principles, anthropological assumptions, predominant loyalties and circumstantial considerations, which are defined in the introduction.

Attitudes toward slavery were ambiguous in the early days of the United States. Most Americans viewed slavery as something in the American experiment that would slowly fade away. With the westward expansion, the issue of whether or not slavery would be introduced into new territories brought increased political agitation. The extremists on both sides of the issue came to the fore. Radical abolitionists, such as David Walker, advocated the immediate overthrow of slavery, by violent means if necessary. William Lloyd Garrison was a pacifist, but still used fiery rhetoric to denounce slavery and call for immediate abolition. Radical defenders of slavery began to argue that it was not a temporary institution to be tolerated, but a virtuous necessity.

Charles Hodge was a conservative Presbyterian. He held a traditional Protestant hermeneutic, taking the literal, obvious meaning of Scripture as truth. Because of this, Hodge could not condemn slavery as sin *per se*, as the Bible does not condemn slavery. However, Hodge did point out the evils of slavery as practiced in the American South. His view of Scripture led him to find the essential equality of all peoples without regard to race. Therefore, racial slavery was wrong in his view. He also spoke out against the abuses of scriptural teachings in American slavery. These included preventing slaves from learning to read, the breakup of families through buying and selling of slaves, and physical abuse of slaves. Torbett noted several influences on Hodge's thinking; the Princeton tradition, the fact that Hodge was a slave-holder, and the Scottish "Common Sense" philosophy. While Hodge held some racist attitudes, his theology limited their effect. He did view Africans as inferior, but paradoxically held to the essential unity and equality of all men, including Africans. Hodge advocated gradual emancipation and re-colonization efforts for freed slaves, such as the experiment in Liberia. He felt this would be the best resolution for the race issue. Because he held the essential equality of all men, Hodge reluctantly saw the possibility of citizenship and suffrage for freed slaves.

Horace Bushnell was a Congregationalist preacher. He is called "the father of American religious liberalism" by many. He was influenced by the Romantic Movement, rejecting the confining rationalism of Hodges. Bushnell felt that

truth was revealed through the senses and emotions. It could not be reduced to definite rational statements. He was not bothered by logical contradictions and preferred a dialectical methodology. This allowed Bushnell to condemn slavery much more strongly than Hodge. His anti-slavery statements called for an end to slavery, although he rejected violent means. Bushnell's approach led to his acceptance of modern (1830's) scientific ideas. This included the polygenetic theory that races were not essentially equal and had differing starting points. He did not see all mankind descending from Adam and Eve. Bushnell advocated ending slavery and giving African-Americans full citizenship and suffrage. But he saw this as leading to their extinction. He viewed the races as unequal and that freedom would doom African-Americans who simply could not compete with Anglo-Saxons in a free society. Yet, he called for abolition because slavery was morally wrong.

An unforeseen consequence of both men's views was their use by supporters of slavery. Southerners would use Hodge when he argued that slavery was not condemned as sin by Scripture. The same writer would use Bushnell in presenting a perceived racial inferiority of Africans and argue that slavery was a paternal, beneficent institution.

David Torbett did an excellent job of presenting the views of both theologians. He selected the criteria for examining them quite well. It was in evaluating them that Torbett was not as successful. He correctly concluded that both men were consistent with their theological methods in approaching the ethical problems presented by slavery, although there were nuanced shifts in their positions over time.

His critique of their failures left some possibilities unexamined. Torbett concluded the lack of an objective standard caused problems for Bushnell's approach, but did not propose a particular standard for theological truth. He criticized Hodge by stating that his literal approach caused him to treat slavery in the abstract and ignore real human suffering. This criticism of Hodge appears to be justified, but could be attributed to reasons other than his literal hermeneutic. It could be the result of his desire for order, naivety, personal culpability as a sometime slaveholder, or other reasons.

There were a few disappointments such as several minor spelling and grammatical errors. More importantly, as this was published by Mercer University Press, it would have been interesting to note John L. Dagg's published views on slavery with Bushnell and Hodge. Dagg supported slavery by defending it as permitted by Scripture, reminiscent of Hodge. Dagg also supported slavery as necessary because of his assumption that Africans were inferior and could not succeed in a free society, reminiscent of Bushnell. Several Southern and Northern theologians and activists are cited, but not Dagg.

This was a very good book on a subject that some would consider long settled. But the thrust of the book is about how one's theology and worldview influence his ethical decisions, not just slavery. This is an issue that each individual needs to examine in light of the many controversial ethical concerns in the current age.

*The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity*. By Thabiti M. Anyabwile. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007, 254 pp., \$20.00.

Thabiti M. Anyabwile is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree from North Carolina State University. Prior to serving at Grand Cayman, he served as an elder/assistant pastor with Mark Dever at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., perhaps the most well-known of a new generation of reformed churches in Southern Baptist life. An African-American himself, Anyabwile's major premise in *The Decline of African American Theology* is that the last two centuries have witnessed a dramatic shift in African-American theology from an evangelical and reformed consensus of the late eighteenth century to a divergent set of beliefs strongly influenced by secularism in the early twenty-first century. He states his major premise by saying, "In effect, cultural concerns captured the [African American] church and supplanted the biblical faithfulness that once characterized it" (18). Anyabwile's hope is that a return to doctrinal orthodoxy within the African-American church will help it be more effective in addressing the spiritual and social needs of the members. While this is a work of serious theological reflection, one senses that Anyabwile hopes his work will be read by a broader audience.

A strength of *The Decline of African American Theology* is Anyabwile's well organized and systematic approach. The book has six chapters addressing major components of systematic theology: The doctrines of revelation, God, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology. Then, each chapter addresses the way African-American's have approached these doctrines in five different eras: the early slavery era through abolition; the reconstruction and "Jim Crow" era; the Great Depression and WWII; Civil Rights era; and finally, the end of the twentieth century and postmodern era (1980 – present).

The author himself adheres to a Reformed theological approach and uses this as a baseline for evaluating the perceived decline in African American theology. He does so for two reasons. First, Anyabwile claims the earliest African American writers were basically Calvinistic/Reformed in their doctrine and he spends a significant amount of time attempting to justify this claim. Second, Anyabwile believes "the Reformed understanding, especially the Reformed doctrines of revelation, God and salvation, best represent the biblical teaching on these subjects" (20). Whether one agrees with Reformed doctrine or not, the author should be credited for stating his bias so clearly.

Anyabwile demonstrates that some of the best work among African-American theologians revolved around the issue of theodicy. Because of the experience of chattel slavery, slaves who became Christians were faced with the immediate challenge of how to reconcile the Biblical claims of God's goodness with the very real evils they lived with every day. Early African American writers like Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833), the first African American to be ordained by any religious body, answered the question of theodicy from an orthodox grid which celebrated God's goodness and sovereignty while addressing in a forthright manner the evil of slavery. Later African American theologians, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, tended to

answer the problem of theodicy in terms of liberation theology, with some even having pantheistic overtones.

Readers will find Anyabwile's critique of James Cone particularly interesting. In particular, he strongly suggests Cone is simply engaging in idolatry and says, "Because Cone so firmly entrenched God in the struggle of black people, his theology ultimately featured a small, provincial deity incapable of the kind of complex and universal rule of creation understood by African Americans through Reconstruction" (94). Anyabwile also argues that Cone's anthropology is flawed and offers this criticism: "If blackness and God were so reflective of one another, where, then, was the theological room for creation "in the image of God" of not only whites, but also Asians, Native Americans, Latinos and Middle Eastern peoples?" (131) Anyabwile also does an admirable job of demonstrating how some of the ideas which have culminated in the thought of James Cone were pre-figured in the doctrinal oddities of Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). The critique of Cone could have been strengthened at two points. First, Anyabwile assumes all readers will know what he means by "liberation theology." If the author hopes his book will influence a broader and not a more narrow spectrum of readers, a brief introduction to liberation theology in general would be helpful. Second, while Anyabwile gives an admirable description of influences on Cone's thought, he does not, in my opinion, do justice to the cross-pollination between Cone's theological development in the 1970's and the broader liberation theology movement throughout the world, especially the work of Gustavo Gutierrez.

Anyabwile also addresses the rise of "Prosperity theology" in the latter half of the twentieth century. As part of this, he details T. D. Jakes' advocacy of "Oneness Pentecostalism" and corresponding rejection of the Trinity. Furthermore, he explains how Creflo Dollar's emphasis on continuing revelation via modern prophecy actually leads to a de-valuing of the authority of Scripture. Yet, it is Anyabwile's critique of prosperity theology that I think needs more thorough reflection. Anyabwile seems to say that Prosperity Theology is simply an outgrowth of modern Pentecostalism and the Azusa Street revival. However, such a simple understanding of Prosperity Theology misses the deeper origins of the movement in the New Thought movement of the mid-1800's. In fact, the historical background for most Prosperity Theology does not simply go back to Azusa Street, but can be traced in a trajectory that begins with Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866), moves to E. W. Kenyon (1867 – 1948), and finally popularized by Kenneth Hagin (1917 – 2003). Furthermore, while Anyabwile rightly critiques Creflo Dollar's soteriology, he fails to address the defective Christology advocated by Dollar which contributes, in my opinion, more significantly to Dollar's flaws than any historical connection with classical Pentecostalism. Central to Prosperity Theology is the idea that Christ had to suffer in Hell and be tortured at the hands of the devil after his crucifixion. Then, Jesus became the first "born again man." Prosperity Theology teaches that all followers of Christ can become born again people in the same way that Christ was born again, and thus can do the things he did. A variation of this teaching is also known as the "little gods" doctrine and has been taught from time to time by Kenneth Copeland, a mentor to Creflo Dollar. Recently, Dollar has gone even further than some Prosperity teachers and ridiculed the doctrine of the

incarnation. None of these things are mentioned in the chapter on Christology, but understanding them puts the defective soteriology in a different light.

Readers may also be surprised that Anyabwile does not address Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at any depth. Dr. King's view of justice possibly has formed the popular opinion of more Americans than any other single individual in the last fifty years, especially his emphasis on social justice in the light of the systemic evil of racist segregation. What is less well-known is the degree to which Dr. King's Christology diverged from the orthodox consensus. *The Decline of African American Theology* would seem to be an excellent place to address both aspects of King's thought. Other significant African American theologians such as Henry McNeal Turner, Howard Thurman, and Benjamin Mays all receive extensive treatment.

Anyabwile concludes *The Decline of African American Theology* by saying, "Though African Americans are predominantly evangelical in their attitudes toward the Bible . . . we are no longer centered upon the Bible in faith and practice" (241). This work is a well-organized attempt to show why this is so. Anyabwile perhaps makes assertions that are too broad at times. For example, beyond a brief mention of Tony Evans, he does not seriously engage any modern African American theologian with a deep commitment to orthodox doctrine. In fact, many African American churches are deeply committed to the "faith once delivered to the saints" and are well aware of the flaws in both liberation theology and Prosperity theology. These areas for improvement noted, this book serves as a good starting point to learn about trends current in African American theology.

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*God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* By John C. Lennox, Oxford: Lion Hudson plc, 2007, 192 pages, U.S. \$14.99 + shipping.

John Lennox asked two "burning" questions concerning the current, ongoing, hotly debated issue of Intelligent Design and Evolution: "Has science buried God?" and "In which direction does science point – matter before mind, or mind before matter?" In answering these two questions, the reader is provided with a breath-taking survey of the current thinking of leading scientists doing cutting-edge research in the relevant sciences. The latest developments in scientific disciplines such as astronomy, biology, information theory, and mathematics are rigorously discussed in search for answers to the burning questions: Which came first, mind or matter? Is God really dead? Although Lennox's aim is to convince the reader that science agrees that God is alive and well, his scientific critique is exhilarating and enlightening, to say the least, regardless of one's particular position on the issue.

There are a plethora of books already available dealing with the Intelligent Design and Evolution debate, and more in the publishing pipeline; so the subject is covered from many perspectives and with varying depths of understanding. However, Lennox's book stands out because of its comprehensive scope (it touches on all relevant scientific disciplines), yet succinct treatment of vitally

relevant scientific subjects, which demonstrate a great depth of understanding of the issues involved. The resources and references he brings to bear on the subject are worth the price of the book in themselves.

Lennox begins by clarifying terminology. Much of the debate arises because evolutionists miss “a very important distinction between the *recognition of design* and the *identification of the designer*.” [Emphasis added] Is their evidence of design in nature? Lennox argues this is a legitimate *science* question. And he agrees that the question: “Who is the designer?” is a theological question; thus the *importance of the distinction*. He also emphasizes the very important fact that “*Statements by scientists are not necessarily statements of science*.” Such truisms are revealed in his excellent treatments of “the war of the worldviews” and “the scope and limits of science.”

To support his claim that *science* can help answer the question: Is their evidence of design in nature? Lennox examines several scientific disciplines for such evidence. The evidence seems abundant. Cosmology, astronomy, and physics have affirmed the “rational intelligibility of the universe;” and that its “fundamental forces are amazingly, intricately, and delicately balanced or ‘fine-tuned’ in order for the universe to be able to sustain life.” Even polemical atheist biologists such as Richard Dawkins affirm that “nature gives an overwhelming *impression of design*.” Origin of life studies “either end in stalemate or in the confession of ignorance.” Mathematics and information theory have led to the formulation of testable hypotheses which could either verify or falsify evolutionary theory.

Lennox presents an excellent discussion on “the nature and scope of evolution.” He critiques some of the so-called proofs of evolution that are found in most biology textbooks. However, one of the most helpful parts of this discourse is his dissection of the concept of “natural selection.” Here he documents a most interesting exchange that occurred in 1862 between Darwin and Joseph Hooker in which Hooker challenged Darwin’s use of natural selection. Hooker wrote: “Natural Selection is as powerless as physical causes to make a variation; the law that ‘like shall *not* produce like’ is at the bottom of [it] all, and is as inscrutable as life itself.” The scientific understanding in 1862 was that “like produced like.” Darwin had introduced a “new law,” which he termed natural selection, that contradicted the scientifically “accepted law” (like produced like). Hooker reprimanded Darwin for not first refuting the accepted law before claiming discovery of a new law. Darwin was understandingly shaken by Hooker’s argument since he could not scientifically refute the accepted law, but only postulate a “new law.”

An important aspect of the book is Lennox’s use of humorous analogues. For example, he uses his Aunt Matilda’s cake as an illustration to demonstrate the limits of science. The world’s top scientists could of course give an exhaustive *description* of the cake. They could identify the number of calories contained; every ingredient used; all the fundamental particles contained in each ingredient; how these particles relate to each other, etc., but when asked the question “*why*, for what *purpose* did Aunt Matilda bake the cake?,” none could answer with scientific certainty. The “*why*” or “*purpose*” question is beyond the limits of science; only Aunt Matilda knows for certain the correct answer. Why is there something instead of nothing? Scientists can *analyze* and *describe* the matter of

the universe, but they cannot answer through “doing science” *why* or for what *purpose* there *is* a universe.

Lennox further demonstrates that there are not only scientific limits but also mathematical probability limits that undermine the claims of evolutionists. Using another rather humorous (“the monkey machine”) analogy, Lennox handily demolishes Dawkins’s methodology for “climbing Mount Improbable.” Dawkins admits to the extreme improbability of evolution if based on chance alone. He therefore proposes as a solution to the improbability problem: “‘breaking the improbability up into small manageable parts, smearing out the luck needed, going round the back of Mount Improbable and crawling up the gentle slopes, inch by million year inch’.” While Dawkins’s word picture may be convincing to the uninformed and uncritical evolutionary hopefuls, rigorous mathematical probability analyses of his detailed proposal by Lennox and others reveal Dawkins’s argument as not only “entirely circular,” but also guilty of introducing *teleology* and *comparative intelligence* as a part of the concept of natural selection; the very concepts he so emphatically denies to exist in nature. Dawkins’s slope behind Mount Improbable is but another illusion, as shown by rigorous scientific argument.

John C. Lennox M.A., Ph.D., D.Phil., D.Sc., is Reader in Mathematics at the University of Oxford and Fellow in Mathematics and the Philosophy of Science at Green College. He has done a marvelous job considering the scope of material addressed. He has captured and elucidated in one book most, if not all, of the essential scientific concepts and principles underlying the Intelligent Design and Evolution debate. However, since scientific knowledge is expanding exponentially the job of the polemicists and apologists on both sides of the issue is an ongoing *work in progress*. A very recent scientific report from the ENCODE consortium (<http://www.geneome.org/cgi/content/full/17/6/669>) declared “The classical view of a gene as a discrete element in the genome has been shaken by ENCODE.” Scientists today are not even sure what constitutes a gene. The greater the scientific knowledge, greater are the mysteries.

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*Ecclesiastes through the Centuries* By Eric Christianson. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, 256 pp. \$84.95, hardcover.

In his second book, *Ecclesiastes through the Centuries*, author Eric Christianson proves to be as much a raconteur as Qohelet himself as he weaves the reception history of one of the Bible’s most enigmatic books. Christianson organizes his work into two primary sections preceded by an introduction that recaps the reception of the book as a whole and followed by a short commentary on the ever-present allure of Qohelet.

He opens the narrative with a dozen or so pages of quotes from novelists, poets, and bards that serve both to show the reader just how diverse the interpretation of this book has been over the past few thousand years and to whet his appetite for the feast that is to come. Christianson then moves on to the introduction, which proves to be valuable even to the most learned of Qohelet

scholars. In this section he explores the reception history of the book as a whole, arranging the information loosely under the headings “pre-modern, early modern, and modern,” by which he primarily intends eras of time rather than philosophical schools, though that is by necessity present. He readily admits the danger of such an arrangement, but offers the reader an apology for his distinctions and allows for the fact that commentators rarely, if ever, can be classified under *only* one of the headings. As a result, the scheme he offers is a useful tool when one is sorting through the wealth of material written on Ecclesiastes.

After the lengthy introduction, which perhaps would have been better suited with a different title, he explores the reception of particular texts within the book. He breaks the text of Ecclesiastes into nine sections, giving some passages a significant amount of space, such as Ecclesiastes 1:2, while leaving out other portions of the text entirely. His rationale for this decision is that, as a relatively brief reception history, the work should primarily concern itself with those passages that have historically had priority. However, one should not think that Christianson has limited himself to merely repackaging what has already been said. As any good guide would do, he offers his own understanding of the passages at the beginning of each chapter, then goes on to discuss the various ways in which pre-moderns, early moderns, and moderns dealt with the issues raised.

The “hermeneutical postscript” and bibliography that round out the narrative may prove to be more valuable than the bulk of the book. Christianson gives a cogent explanation of the haunting draw of this strange book that causes the reader to want to explore for himself the ways in which Qohelet has influenced the great writers of the world. The bibliography makes such a journey less daunting, and even attainable. While *Ecclesiastes through the Centuries* is by no means exhaustive, it nevertheless offers both the novice and the seasoned scholar an accessible introduction to ways in which Ecclesiastes has influenced the world in which we now live. Christianson is an exceptionally skilled author who makes the quest for understanding Ecclesiastes thoroughly enjoyable while also encouraging the reader to rethink his own understanding of the text.

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*Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament.* By Stanley E. Porter (ed.). Grand Rapids, MI. / Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2006, xiii + 316 pp. US\$29.00 paperback, ISBN: 978-0-8028-2846-0

The study of the New Testament (NT) use of the Old Testament (OT) is one of the most fascinating areas of biblical studies and the volume edited by Stanley Porter offers ample proof to support this assertion. The last several decades have seen a wealth of contributions in this area, ranging from the still-indispensable work of D. A. Carson and P. J. Williamson (eds.), *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988) to the most recent one, G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of Old Testament*

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). This indeed has been a dynamic field of investigation, harnessing the efforts of some of the most able exegetes, with a significant presence and contribution from Evangelical scholars. As a prime result, a more refined understanding of the nature of the NT as Scripture has emerged, which highlights the organic link between the two testaments. The NT stands as the heir of and the theological outgrowth from the Jewish Scriptures in light of the climactic, filial revelation of God. The present book contributes admirably to heighten the appreciation for the complexities of this field as well as to strengthen and refine the ability to do research in it.

The volume coordinated by Stanley Porter assembles the essays presented at the 2003 Bingham Colloquium in New Testament, an event with an already significant track record in print, the prominent McMaster New Testament Studies series that have been published annually by Eerdmans since 1997. The collection of articles mirrors, with slight differences, the dynamics of the conference, in which each paper delivered benefited from a response from A. Köstenberger.

The editor of the volume sets the stage for the discussion in his article "The Use of the OT in the NT" with a brief overview of the *status quaestiones* and a helpful presentation of the main ideas and summaries of the eleven subsequent chapters. The opening two articles focus primarily on methodological aspects. Thus, D. Stamps advocates for an understanding of the NT use of OT within the parameters of rhetorical conventions available to and intentionally used by the NT authors. R. T. McLay addresses the thorny issue of the fluid state in which we find the sacred texts in the first century, texts used by the NT authors as source for their quotations, allusions and ultimately, theology.

The following four articles turn the investigation to the Gospels. M. Knowles on Matthew clarifies the role of Scripture both as the influence that shaped the mission statement of Jesus as well as the target of subsequent Christological interpretation. C. Evans on Mark proves that the theme of fulfillment, normally associated with the other three Gospels, features prominently in the earliest gospel as well. In Luke-Acts, S. Porter finds that the Scriptures stand as the shaping force behind the missionary philosophy and practice of the Early Church. P. Millers turns to John to find the fine balance between the way the Scriptures influenced Jesus' self-understanding, only to become, later, the subject of His interpretation.

Two articles are devoted to the Pauline corpus. J. Aageson surveys the OT function in the four major epistles, with 1 Cor. 10 as a crucial test case, while S. Keesmaat takes on the usage in the shorter epistles. The final group of NT canon comprising of the General Epistles and the book of Revelation is unevenly divided between K. A. Richardson's study on the singular NT reference to Job in the epistle of James, and a brief review by A. Köstenberger of the OT use in the remaining NT books, the Pauline Pastorals, the General Epistles and Revelation. Köstenberger's response to all papers read at the conference stand grouped together as the final chapter in the volume.

The choice for this sort of presentation of articles and responses makes the duty of any reviewer considerably easier, since each presentation has already benefited from a substantial critique printed alongside. Granted, the critique offered by Köstenberger was limited by time/space considerations and did not

target all the issues that might have deserved a rejoinder. A case in point is the consistent and nuanced article of T. McLay. In analyzing Deut. 32:43 quotation in Heb. 1:6, he concludes, “the citation ... provides an excellent illustration of the pluriformity of the Scriptures that were available to the NT writers”. This, for McLay, supports, if not proves, the assertion that since “there was no canon of Scripture for the NT writers ... there was no biblical text either” (p. 58). One can only say that this might indeed be the case for Heb. 1 use of Deut. 32, but it would be an exaggeration to derive a similar conclusion from all, even most, of the OT quotations in NT. This or other potential caveats should not dent the usefulness and richness of the way the collection covers the topic. The consistency of all chapters, as well as the helpful format in which the material is presented, stand out as the two clear advantages of the volume. To this reviewer, however, the most important aspect about it is that while the book invites its readers to hear the OT in NT, it also allows them to hear seasoned scholars reason and dialog about the issues involved. That in itself justifies granting the book a legitimate and deserved place among the reliable sources available to those who do research in the NT use of the OT.

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*Spin-Off Churches: How One Church Successfully Plants Another.* By Rodney Harrison, Tom Cheyney, and Don Overstreet. Nashville, TN: B and H Academic, 2008, xi + 324 pp., \$24.99 paper.

I was recently discussing church planting partnerships with a friend at one of the Baptist State Convention offices. He was lamenting to me how difficult it is to find *good parents for church babies* these days. I immediately told him how pleased I was to find that exact language in a new book *Spin-Off Churches* (138). He told me that many of the pastors of their established churches lend the church's name to the process of birthing a new work, but not much else. He thinks that the men want to brag about their missions to their buddies at the Convention. I told him I have a tough time believing that vanity motivates Southern Baptist pastors, and asked if perhaps they were just unsure about the requirements of good church plant parenting. Either way, we agreed, church plants need good sponsors, and established churches need the spiritual rush that comes from expanding the Kingdom of God. If ignorance is the problem, perhaps *Spin-Off Churches* will spell the end of administration-only sponsorships.

Harrison, Cheyney, and Overstreet's *Spin-Off Churches* makes an important contribution to an area in need of development. Ten years ago, one could find little more than the Bible to help him plant a church. Today, books for church planters fill yards of shelves, but what about the pastor whose church wants to sponsor a new work? He wanders through the stacks wondering if Blackaby's *Experiencing God* can meet yet another need. Eureka! *Spin-Off Churches* offers help in its pleasant and timely pages. The authors' wealth of experience shines through in their personal stories from the field, and many practical principals. They arranged the book in a reference format, making it useful for many years.

“Part One--Sponsoring Church Fundamentals” gives the reader a foundational theology and background of church planting with a helpful and realistic picture to help church planting critics understand the purpose of new churches. They ask a great question in the first chapter, “Can the Great Commission be fulfilled with the planting of new churches?” (8). The answer is clearly no, it cannot, but while many established churches discuss their concern about the Great Commission, very few sponsor new churches. The dichotomy is glaring.

The authors might have helped their case a bit had they outlined the role of Baptists in the Free Church Movement (18-19). Additionally, it might be helpful to develop a brief history of Southern Baptists as a church planting people (19)—is that not how we grew so large?

In “Part Two—Attitudes Toward Church Sponsorship,” the authors offer a sampling of statistical analyses that reveal areas of agreement and disconnections between church planters and their sponsoring partners. While the tables and charts help some, a narrative approach to advance their points would be helpful. Not everyone can tolerate or understand banks of numbers.

Additionally, the statistical sample may not be as accurate as one would hope from a book published by an academic house. The readers of the *Church Planter Update*, do not offer a fair assessment of attitudes about church planting. Redoing the survey from a broader cross-section of Baptist life—readers of *SBC Life* for instance—might actually strengthen the authors’ case.

“Part Three—Finding the Church Planting Model that Fits” continues with brief sections on missionary support and strategy theories. The authors provide useful information on how to set up a support system for church planters that includes coaching and emotional support besides helping the planter meet his financial needs. The sobering statistic that only three percent of Southern Baptist churches support new works is cause for shame among us, but the authors at least provide a platform for change among willing pastors (65). Several broad categories offer types of churches to consider, including a methodology for redeeming a church split, which is the most pleasantly surprising chapter in the book.

A practical section on the stages of a church plant follows. Overall, “Part Four—Understanding the Phases of New Church Development,” would benefit from more emphasis on the role of listening to one’s community in developing a strategic plan. Excellent observations on what to do when one finds himself in an unfruitful area balance the chapter nicely (135).

In “Part Five—Finding the Resources,” the authors give readers several key principles on how to find resources to fund and staff a new church. The contribution and strategic importance of church planters who fund their salaries through secular employment is a key element. It might help to lose some of the stigma associated with the term “bi-vocational” if church planting leaders drop the term. Opt instead for a term I coined, *intentional employment*, to demonstrate that a secular job often provides the best evangelism field as well as a healthy financial base.

“Part Six—The Route to Spin-Off Success: Putting the Rubber to the Road” introduces readers the necessary details of written covenants, supervisory roles, and adds extremely helpful chapters on the most common mistakes that planters

and their partners make. The two “Top...Mistakes...” chapters alone make the book worth its cover price.

Summing it up, “Part Seven—Selling the Idea for Becoming a Sponsoring Church” offers proven techniques for helping others understand the vision and join the planting effort. Eight important Appendixes offer readers a quick reference library of lists and worksheets to move the process along.

*Spin-Off Churches* promises to increase the success of North American church plants, and (once the news get around) it may increase the number of sponsoring churches. I recommend that Baptist Conventions and Associations freely distribute copies to the leaders of their key sponsoring churches immediately. Moreover, church planters will want to read the book so they can know what to look for when they begin recruiting sponsoring churches. Seminary and Bible college missions, evangelism, and church planting professors will want to consider *Spin-Off Churches* as assigned reading for the students knowing that the book will spur lively discussions.

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*A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter* (Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume II). By Ben Witherington, III. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007, 432 pp., \$32.00.

Ben Witherington’s “socio-rhetorical” commentary series aims to root our reading of the New Testament within the rhetorical and sociological milieu of the first-century Mediterranean world. In keeping with other volumes in the series, Witherington’s 1-2 Peter commentary focuses on identifying the type of rhetoric that is employed in the biblical text, and how the author has structured his argument to reach that rhetorical objective. Along the way Witherington offers a number of historical and sociological insights that help clarify our understanding of not only the biblical material, but also what it must have been like to live as a Christian in first-century Asia Minor. This commentary format allows Witherington to showcase his greatest strengths as an exegete—his familiarity with ancient rhetoric, his vast knowledge of both Greco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds, and his keen and creative historical imagination.

Given Witherington’s strengths, it is perhaps the case that his most unique contributions to both 1 and 2 Peter are found in his introductory material, where he creatively and insightfully deals with a number of historical-critical issues such as authorship, audience, social setting, date of composition, and where he introduces the findings of his rhetorical analysis. With respect to 1 Peter, Witherington goes against the scholarly consensus and mounts to date the best argument for 1 Peter being written to a primarily Jewish audience—offering Hellenized Jews of Asia Minor an ethical monotheism that did not put up barriers with their non-Jewish compeers. That is not to say that Witherington views, as many scholars do, 1 Peter to be a text that advocates cultural accommodation. To the contrary, Witherington highlights how Peter (he affirms Petrine authorship) calls his readers to suffering in order to remain faithful to God, and how 1 Peter’s rhetoric (“deliberative rhetoric in an Asiatic style [45]”)

seeks to inculcate new values rather than maintain the status quo. Other contributions include the proposal that 1 Peter follows the style of Asiatic Greek, which would help explain such features in the text as (1) frequent usage of comparison, (2) accumulation of synonyms, (3) alliteration, and (4) highly emotive language. Witherington also modifies previous rhetorical outlines of the letter, which pastors may find helpful for organizing a preaching series on 1 Peter (49).

Witherington considers 2 Peter to be a document quite different from 1 Peter in a variety of ways. First, while he affirms Petrine authorship for 1 Peter, Witherington regards 2 Peter to be a composite document that includes testimony from Peter (2 Pet 1.12-21), as well as material from Jude. He does not, however, regard 2 Peter to be pseudepigraphical: "It bears neither the form nor the character of a pseudepigraphon, and since it includes genuine Petrine material, it is understandably attributed to its first and most famous contributor (271)." Second, he argues that 2 Peter takes up a different rhetorical objective: rather than inculcating new values, 2 Peter seeks to encourage its readers to continue to develop already-accepted values in light of the return of Christ (epideictic rhetoric; 274). Third, whereas 1 Peter was addressing Hellenized Jewish Christians, 2 Peter is "one of the first Christian attempts at 'mass communication' (266)," written to encourage all Christians in the empire.

Those who have read the previous review in this journal or who have worked through Joel Green's 1 Peter commentary will be interested to read Witherington's reflections on the enterprise of "theological exegesis" (255-259). While Witherington sees value in the approach taken up by Green and his like, he is concerned that the approach downplays the historical givenness of the text. Both Green and Witherington agree that something separates the twenty first-century reader from the first-century biblical texts. Green wants to stress that this gap has more to do with our own theological dispositions than with whether we understand the socio-rhetorical context of the letter. While Witherington agrees that our theological and ecclesiological perspectives influence biblical interpretation, he is unwilling to abandon historical investigation of the New Testament, or the enterprise of writing historical commentaries on the New Testament, since both are integral to a right reading of the text. Perhaps is not an either/or, but rather a both/and. Historical enquiry can, without question, open up our understanding of the Bible—and even reveal our own biases and false conceptions. But as the history of critical biblical scholarship has shown, historical enquiry in and of itself is inadequate to make theological sense of the biblical material. Perhaps the motto "faith seeking understanding" encapsulates how the two emphases of Green and Witherington hold together.

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*Evil and the Justice of God*, By N. T. Wright, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006, 174 pp., \$24.00.

Opponents of Christian theism have often argued that our God cannot exist, if evil exists. The complaint can be expressed as a simple deduction. If God is all-

knowing, he would know about the suffering in our world and would know, from a practical standpoint, how to get rid of it. If he is all-powerful, he could do whatever it takes to rid the world of that suffering. And finally, if he is morally-perfect, he would *desire* to banish suffering from our world. Indeed, since God created everything, no factors should have kept him from creating heavenly conditions *ex nihilo* in the beginning, rather than the world as we know it, complete its vulnerability to wars, rapes, plagues, and disasters. We cannot say in his defense, “He’s only doing the best he can with the raw materials that were available.” He made those raw materials. Come to think of it, the antagonist should say, a God who will change us someday—as he makes all things new—could surely change everything for the better right now, ourselves included. So goes the deductive problem of evil: if suffering exists, God cannot exist.

The argument sounds convincing, and it works quite well at the street-level, where one is less likely to be halted by informed rebuttals. Who knows why God does not annihilate the world’s Hitlers, Stalins, pedophiles, and pushers? Why does he suffer the strutting Masters of the Universe that surround us on all sides, to say nothing of fiends with global outreach? Why do we have hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes? Or why do we have so many? It is worth pointing out, of course, that the basic dilemma, *Either God or suffering, but not both*, falls apart unless we have proved conclusively, *There is no morally sufficient reason why God should have permitted the suffering that occurs*. Yet no one has done the latter, and no one ever could. Thus we are left to ponder this foggy question: is God’s existence highly unlikely given that suffering occurs?<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the Scriptures will answer this last question, as they do so many others. We go searching there for answers, and yes: we certainly get them, even to the problem of suffering. But there is a catch here, and Tom Wright’s recent book, *Evil and the Justice of God* (= EJG), captures it. The biblical writers answer our questions about evil and suffering, but not theoretically or with exacting precision, as if to demonstrate why each teardrop must fall. On the contrary, they address the problem with reference to salvation history, assuring us that God will do something about evil, if we do not see him eradicating it just now. Indeed, looking back on the death and resurrection of Christ, we can see that God already has taken the most decisive step toward that end. Wright draws this sort of answer from the whole of Scripture and then outlines the new life that we Christians must live, now that God’s victory over all powers, including death, is under way, if not complete.

The first chapter of *EJG* observes our horrified rediscovery of evil in Western societies, after a long stretch of relative peace. We have seen exceptional progress on many fronts, especially since WWII, with the result that we expect to remain always in the storm’s eye. Wright argues that we scarcely notice worldwide suffering, much less do anything about it, until we face some of it ourselves—until it “hits us in the face” (p. 24), as the events of September 11 did. Wright argues that because Western people prosper and sleep soundly,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), Part 1.

we assume that everyone tends to do so. Evil can then surprise us; and when it does, we may overreact or behave somehow inappropriately. In fact, the word Wright uses most often to evaluate the response of the comfortable is “immature” (pp. 26-29), and their actions become instances of “lashing out” against the unexpected enemy (pp. 27-28).

According to Wright, “the official response (of the United States’ government) was exactly the kind of knee-jerk, unthinking, immature lashing out that gets us nowhere” (p. 27, parenthesis added). We Americans evidently thought that our country “as a whole was a pure, innocent victim, so that the world could be neatly divided up into evil people (particularly Arabs) and good people (particularly Americans and Israelis), and that the latter had a responsibility now to punish the former” (p. 27). So we invaded Afghanistan and Iraq because we were angry, having failed to count to ten, as it were, before losing it nationwide and thus globally. That is one interpretation of our nation’s response, and the *New York Times* and NBC News, plus several member states of the European Union, would smile on Wright as he says these things. But he does not address the practical question of our time. If we believe—in good faith, if not always correctly—that a rogue nation intends to do us harm, whether directly or by proxy, what shall our response be?

Other nations cannot invade countries and occupy them with minimal casualties on their own side, so they will not entertain military options. Ceaseless diplomacy and appeasement become virtues of necessity. But the United States can do this (albeit with mixed results), and so we ask: would President Bush have been derelict in his duty to protect the citizens of our country if he (a) believed that a rogue nation meant to do us great harm and (b) did nothing to disarm it? Wright suggests that we took military action as if to “solve the problem of evil” in our time (p. 28). But our representatives did not make that argument, if memory serves; nor did they present this effort as a war of the Sons of Light versus the Sons of Darkness, although they did call our enemies what they are, after all. Islamofacists are evil because, whatever their grievances with the United States, they chose to strike back *in this way*, with 9/11-scale massacres.

At the end of the day, we know that the United States is not an aggressor nation, whatever its flaws, as evidenced by the fact that we have not annexed Canada and scorched North Korea. But we thought that the regimes of Afghanistan and Iraq were aggressive, and this belief warranted defensive maneuvers. We do not claim any “right of the United States to rule the world, whether by economic or military means” (p. 35). On the contrary, we sense an unwelcome and expensive duty to export two blessings that unleash greater prosperity and peace wherever they take hold—viz., freedom and the rule of law. One mentions this misdiagnosis of United States foreign policy motives only because Wright uses the United States as his prime illustration of collective immaturity, and his otherwise fine book suffers because of it.

If the biblical answer to the problem of evil/suffering is the victory of Christ over fallen powers, certain practical conclusions follow—conclusions that would follow distantly, if at all, from an abstracted, ‘greater good’ theodicy. According to Wright, our “intermediate tasks,” whereby we practice the victory of Christ over evil and his inaugurated reign, include prayer and a commitment

to radical holiness (pp. 118-120). They also include, among others perhaps, a regenerated realism about the hazards of absolute power—i.e., power of just the sort now had by the United States vis-à-vis the world. Wright does not identify the USA as the example here, but he says enough throughout *EJG* to imply the connection. We cannot subdue evil once and for all with military strikes and imposed democracies, Wright argues, because the winners tend toward corruption themselves (p. 122). The situation will never reach equilibrium, and thus we must all insist upon checked power and the governmental imperative “do justice and love mercy” (p. 122). Islamic societies of the Middle East will have none of this, of course; and that might explain our commitment to regime change in a few cases, but yes: Wright’s overall point is well-taken. We have to be realistic about what fallen humanity can and will do once it has gained total control.

Wright’s most effective chapter, entitled “Deliver Us From Evil: Forgiving Myself, Forgiving Others,” takes Miroslav Volf’s, *Exclusion and Embrace* [Abingdon, 1994], as its starting point. The strength of Volf’s argument, as Wright captures it, is that it refuses to soften offenses for the sake of reconciliation. “Whether we are dealing with international relations or one-on-one personal relations, evil must be named and confronted,” versus pretending “it wasn’t so bad after all” (p. 133). The civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the fallout from South African apartheid illustrate the challenge of forgiveness that Wright dwells on in this section. We sometimes wonder how one can experience the joys of heaven at full strength when, all the while, we have our memories: we recall how others have violated us and we them. The answer, he argues, is that when any of us—God included—“offers genuine forgiveness to someone else, we are no longer conditioned by the evil that they have done—even if they refuse to accept this forgiveness” (p. 141).

Wright concludes *EJG* by treating the matter of self-forgiveness, which involves the same process of exclusion and embrace. We face our guilt squarely and recognize it for the offense that it is. Then, according to the promise of God, we accept the free grace that is offered to us in Christ. Something like self-love can then begin—or at least self-acceptance—though its basis will not be our own merits but our position before God in Christ. “This astonished and grateful acceptance of the free grace and love of God is what some traditions have meant when they have echoed Paul’s language about ‘justification by faith’” (p. 162). At the same time, Wright cautions, forgiveness differs from bland tolerance and global indifference to the sinner’s track-record. We do not show forgiveness toward embezzlers and pedophiles by letting them keep our books and mind our children once more. They have forfeited implicit trust in these areas, perhaps permanently so, and they will not get it back with a few episodes of tearful apology plus promises to straighten up. As Wright says, we must retain “at least some vestiges of common sense” (p. 150). But we can, in general terms, treat the offender as a brother or sister in Christ, which is our duty after all.

In the end, as Wright forewarned us, the Bible does not solve the problem of radical evil. We do not learn why God permits it to occur in his good world. But “what we are promised, however, is that God will make a world in which all shall be well, and manner of thing shall be well, a world in which forgiveness is

one of the foundation stones and reconciliation is the cement which holds everything together” (p. 164). And the “best news of all is that we don’t have to wait for the future to start experiencing our deliverance from evil” (p. 165). We might even work toward a world in which people seldom wish to become terrorists or, say, economic predators (p. 165). No one doubts that our lives can improve greatly with just behavior and non-coercive expressions of Christian peacemaking. Yet we can expect no progress along those lines without upholding basic standards of civility and protecting ourselves against those who mean to do us harm, by force if necessary, whether such threats are foreign or domestic. It is a sad fact of our condition, but it is a fact nonetheless: the bad people must restrain the even worse.

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*1 Peter* (The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary). By Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, 331 pp., \$20.00.

It would be entirely unfair to fault Joel Green’s 1 Peter commentary for what it is lacking. You will not find, for example, a consistent catalogue of scholarly positions on key passages in the letter; neither are there extensive philological studies, or regular discussions of the Greek grammar and syntax; the commentary is not overly concerned with historical-critical issues. This is by design, however. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series eschews conventional commentary features and instead seeks to offer a fresh approach that focuses on the theological task of exegesis, allowing hermeneutics and systematic theology to have their say at the exegetical table. In this regard, Green’s execution of the Two Horizons mission is exemplary—but perhaps this is to be expected since he is one of the series editors.

The commentary is divided into two parts. In the first section Green offers a well-written, paragraph-by-paragraph exposition of 1 Peter based on the Greek text that orients the reader to the letter’s theological concerns. Two characteristics that make Green’s exegesis particularly engaging are (1) his adeptness at hearing and/or tracing out the implications of Old Testament citations and allusions in the letter, and (2) his ability to draw together major sections of the letter to show the overall coherence of Peter’s thought. What is equally remarkable is how the exegetical section has been faithful to the aims of Two Horizons while also demonstrating an awareness of the scholarly debates, and of the historical, grammatical, and philological issues of particular passages, but without getting bogged down in the rehearsal of all the details.

In the second section of the book, “Theological Horizons”, having worked through 1 Peter exegetically, Green engages with wider theological issues that have been instigated by the examination of the biblical text. In this section, Green explores Peter’s contributions to the conventional theological categories of theology proper, pneumatology, Christology, anthropology, and soteriology. But he couples this with reflections on suffering, the narrative theology of the letter, Peter’s rhetorical strategy, his hermeneutical assumptions and how they should inform ours, as well as what 1 Peter might have to say regarding the

relationship between Christianity and politics—all topics you don't often find in more conventional commentaries or in discussions of systematic theology.

Of the many significant and intriguing contributions this commentary makes to the study of 1 Peter, three will be highlighted. First, Green demonstrates that 1 Peter is not merely the raw data for theology, but is also “an exemplar of the theological task” (190). In both his exegetical section and also with his theological essays in part two, Green persuasively shows that we not only learn theology from 1 Peter, we also learn how to *do* theology from 1 Peter. Second, Green continually underscores Peter's concern to shape and solidify Christian identity that leads to a corresponding lifestyle. One of the more helpful observations that Green has made with respect to identity formation is that Peter's reflection on Christ's suffering is not an end in and of itself, but rather serves to inform and enable holy living and faithful witness to the world. In other words, Christology serves to inform ecclesiology. Finally, Green suggests that our full apprehension of 1 Peter has less to do with the historical gap between us and Peter's first readers, and more to do with whether we are ready to embrace the identity that is put forth in the letter. Are we willing to acknowledge that we live in a place that is yet to be our home? Are we willing to undergo suffering (which for Peter includes social alienation) in order to remain faithful to God's calling on our lives?

Green's 1 Peter commentary will be of particular worth to those who are engaged in the preaching and teaching of 1 Peter in an ecclesiastical setting. Those who have longed to see a concrete example of what “theological exegesis” actually looks like will also want to get their hands on this commentary. And while this volume was not primarily written for the academy, scholars exploring the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, narrative theology, Christian identity formation, and the interface between the gospel and Roman imperial ideology will find this commentary to be thought-provoking and informative.

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*The God Delusion*. By Richard Dawkins. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. x + 406 pp.

A review of Richard Dawkins' latest book, *The God Delusion* (= GD), requires some apology to *MJT* readers for two reasons. First, the book came out in 2006; and here we are, two years later, set to offer commentary on it. But secondly, reviews of this kind highlight a work which hardly advances the debate over theism, given its repetition of standard atheistic objections.<sup>1</sup> Dawkins has all

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<sup>1</sup> Atheism puts its best foot forward in J. L. Mackie's, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God* (OUP, 1982), Michael Martin's, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Temple University, 1992), and Antony Flew's, *God and Philosophy*, Revised Edition, (Prometheus, 2005). All three function at a much higher level than the GD, because of their willingness to treat theism as having a case to be answered, as opposed to being essentially dismissed as a juvenile fairytale.

sorts of arguments in the GD tending toward decide; yet we have seen all of this before, and it has all been answered before. Let each one judge how well the battle goes: Dawkins, at any rate, adds little to it, save for a question-begging refutation of theism based on God's supposed complexity (more on this later).

Yet the GD tells us something valuable about Dawkins himself. We learn that he has long since abandoned the philosophical stance. Gone is the attempt to wrestle with alternative viewpoints sympathetically before taking up the gloves. Dawkins cannot wait to 'go polemic,' partly because he is good at it—a gold medalist in sassy putdowns.<sup>2</sup> But he also goes negative early and often because he hates theistic worldviews, especially the one featured in the Bible. 'Hates' is a strong word, of course; but for the doubters among us, one offers the following paragraph which the author regards as some of his best work (p. 31):

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all of fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

Dawkins actually recites this paragraph for Ben Stein, at the conclusion of *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, so he obviously stands by it; yet he never answers the question raised by his 374-page sneer: if he has fairly described the God of Scripture, why do so many people adore the latter? They fear him also: we know that, and they should do so. But they actually love and praise him, deeply and genuinely. Can Dawkins do no better in explaining this than to postulate their suffering from a 'mental virus'? He finds no trace of a just and loving God in the Bible, none whatsoever. One can state with some confidence, in fact, that he has not even tried.

In this sense, Dawkins falls short of the standard put forward by the philosopher Brand Blanshard, in his celebrated essay, *On Philosophical Style*:

Again, if a philosopher is a good human being, he knows that many of the beliefs he is attacking are intertwined inextricably with the hopes and feelings of those who hold them, and his controversial manner will take note of these involvements.<sup>3</sup> At a minimum, this "taking note" would include a stab at objectivity; and because Dawkins is an intelligent and gifted writer, he could have managed as much, describing theistic creationism sympathetically before drawing his sword. But he chose not to do so and produced instead a cruel and unjust work which, for that reason, misleads even his fellow infidels. Eventually, they will discover,

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<sup>2</sup> Greatly ironic, then, is Dawkins' contempt for Ann Coulter and simultaneous posturing as one who barely knows who she is (cf., GD, pp. 288, 321). Dawkins travels the same cable-news circles that she does and is Great Britain's answer to her. He too is an acid-tongued polemicist who shocks for a living.

<sup>3</sup> Brand Blanshard, *On Philosophical Style*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1969 (1954), pp. 16-17.

no doubt to their shame, that, *God created the heavens and the earth*, is nothing like milquetoast claim that Dawkins makes it out to be.

A foundational maxim of the GD is: *The more we learn about the natural world, the less convinced we should be that God exists*. Beside it rests the idea that Ockham's Razor defeats creationism, once Darwinism has become even vaguely plausible.<sup>4</sup> If we can imagine natural forces producing cabbages and kings, we must 'default' to the view that they have; for in that case, only one kind of thing exists and gladly so.<sup>5</sup> Supernatural causes have become needless and unwelcome as threats to naturalism's elegant simplicity. If an inference like this does not account for the enabling that Darwin's theory receives in the GD, one struggles to explain Dawkins' patience with it and why he thinks that Darwinism—plus Cambrian flights of imagination—subtracts God. Any 'just-so' story will do. The GD contains no positive case for the view that natural forces alone produced complex living things, only references to potential lines of research and a dismissal of Darwin's critics. But if Darwinian explanations always win just because of their naturalism, research itself seems hardly necessary.

The GD soon leaves the question of science and religion behind and strays into areas where Dawkins is both impatient and resolutely uninformed. All five of Thomas Aquinas' theistic proofs are treated in three pages of text. Within that span, Dawkins pretends to demolish both the Cosmological and Teleological arguments for God's existence. So, for example, the reason why the cosmological argument (= CA) does not work, according to Dawkins, is that worries about infinite regressions of causes would apply just as well to God himself (p. 77). In this complaint, however, he rushes past the insight that the CA does its best work not in proving that the God of Scripture exists but in *eliminating naturalism*, which requires an infinite regress of physical events. Naturalism must say this because, in its austere simplicity, it can say nothing else and thereby paints itself into the corner of absurdity. The singularity crouched at the ontological starting line for an infinite number of moments, waiting for some new cause to arise (from where?); then suddenly, when the time (?) was right, the expansion occurred, launching the singularity toward the year 2008 and beyond.<sup>6</sup> From a logical standpoint, this claim is on all fours with the statement, *Then Mt. Olympus spontaneously moved*. Rhetoric about antimatter and force fields cannot solve the basic problem.

We do not know precisely what condition God was in before creation (perhaps even before time as we know it); but his transcendence—which was

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<sup>4</sup> In this review, I am using 'creationism' in the broad sense to denote the theory that God brought living beings into existence, whatever concrete mechanisms were involved in his doing so. Some forms of creationism would, therefore, be incompatible with Genesis 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes called the "principle of parsimony," Ockham's Razor requires us to favor the simplest adequate explanation, such that we do not multiply explanatory assumptions or entities needlessly.

<sup>6</sup> The 'singularity' is what one gets to by compressing our universe back into the state immediately preceding the "Big Bang." It is the point of infinite density, where all laws of nature as we know them break down. Of course, if this cosmological model is incorrect, no references to singularities back then would be apropos.

not invented just to answer this objection—gives us elbow-room that naturalism forsakes in its commitment to explanatory simplicity above all else. Something will have to be a self-starter within or beyond our universe, as appropriate—either God, a conscious being with a freedom to choose, or the singularity from which the Big Bang emerged. But we *know* that the latter cannot have sprung causelessly into action. Naturalism itself does not have the explanatory resources to enfold that idea because it will not permit itself to say, in effect, “Some unseen, unknown force acted upon the singularity to jump-start the universe.” Nor can naturalists consistently argue that the singularity sprung causelessly from a ‘void’ of whatever sort, because such an entity would be above or below nature—choose your preposition—if anything is.

Dawkins treats the Design Argument (= DA) with similar techniques: the argument is taken to the first layer of rebuttal and set aside just in time. Long before the DA made its philosophical debut, biblical theists had agreed that God is not mechanically complex. He does not have parts that require precise assembly and coordination. He is a complicated being, to be sure, but only in the sense that personalities might be complex. Interlocking and functioning parts have nothing to do with it. Consequently, the simplicity of God is not an *ad hoc* hypothesis invented just to save the DA from an embarrassing rejoinder: “Why isn’t God’s complexity in need of a Super-Designer?” We would affirm this doctrine in any case, though we note its destructive effect on Dawkins’ “Ultimate 747 Argument.”

According to Dawkins, theists believe that nature’s improbably complex entities require a Designer; but in that case, he argues, God would have to be even more complex still. So we have his complexity to explain, and yet we cannot invoke a Super-God to deal with it. Why not accept the ultimacy of nature itself and take our leave of God? One has to stop somewhere, and we ought to quit before postulating another sphere of reality (i.e., the supernatural) so long as Darwinism still has a shot at accounting for what we see. Alongside this plea comes the complaint that intelligent design theorists misrepresent the role of chance in Darwin’s theory. Genetic mutations occur randomly but, Dawkins argues, chance has little to do with the different survival rates resulting from different body types. A Great Dane *will* outlive a Chihuahua, if both must survive an Alaskan winter: effect follows cause in a predictable way. In this sense, numerous slight modifications can “climb Mount Improbable,” taking unicellular organisms on an extended journey concluding with us—or so Dawkins argues (p. 122). But these arguments cry out for follow-up inquiries.

In the first instance, orthodox theism rejects the idea of God’s mechanical complexity. He has no parts that must fit together in a functional way, any more than one’s personality has actual sides or dimensions. Dawkins could have some other kind of complexity in mind for God, but he would need to make that clear; and he has not in the GD. As to the larger problem of Darwinism’s adequacy, we have this worry left unanswered by Dawkins. The latter’s defense of evolution presupposes gradualism. One gets from blindness to eyesight, for example, by infinitesimal genetic mutations: a little here, a little there; and as the ages pass, vision results. This constructive march works, according to Dawkins, because 1% of an eye or wing beats 0%, giving the one-percenters a reproductive advantage over their entirely blind or flightless cousins; and 2% is

even better (pp. 123-124). But this odds-making gesture leaves gradualism far behind, since the leap from zero to one is a Darwinian ‘saltation,’ a sudden change that he specifically proscribed. The question is not, “What advantage in survival (and thus reproduction) might 1% of an eye or wing bring?,” but rather, “What good is .00001% of an eye, compared with none?” That is the breaking-point of orthodox Darwinism, and Dawkins would have seen it long ago.

Like many of the New Atheists—including Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris and the late Douglas Adams—Dawkins has a strong personal need to cast himself in the role of the martyr, as if his writing the GD were evidence of uncommon valor.<sup>7</sup> He joins a hunted minority of freethinkers who express the unmentionable, risking in it all in so doing (pp. 20-21). But the only boundaries faced by our village contrarians are ethical, not legal. They have an obligation to treat such matters in ways that help us think clearly about them, if not also to advance the discussion itself. Dennett is usually thought-provoking; some of the others as well, when their attraction to rhetorical bomb-throwing does not take over. Yet even now, in wake of their various offenses, nothing untoward has happened to any of them, save for some hate-mail (one assumes). They have indeed been on the run these days—viz., from television appearances to lucrative speaking engagements, from lavish book contracts to film roles. If this is persecution, may we all suffer with them.

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*God's Twilight Zone – Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible.* By T. Anthony Perry. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008, 208 pp. , paperback, \$19.95.

Anthony Perry received his Ph.D. at Yale and is Professor Emeritus at the University of Connecticut. He has also taught at Williams College, Smith College, Loyola University, Hebrew University, and Ben Gurion University. Dr. Perry has authored several books, including *The Honeymoon Is Over – Jonah's Argument with God* (Hendrickson, 2006). *God's Twilight Zone* is not an introduction to wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, the book investigates specific texts which are outside the wisdom books yet dovetail with the wisdom genre. Perry specifically aims to interact with the ambiguity of these passages. He compares this exercise with viewing creation at twilight, when “things become blurred, open to multiple interpretations (p. xi).”

Although Perry focuses on alternate and multiple readings of texts, it is important to note that he is looking for legitimate readings based on the ambiguity of the original Hebrew. He states, “At the heart of the matter, in all cases, is the meaning of the biblical text, not what we would like it to mean but what in fact it does mean (p. xx).” His investigation is undoubtedly text-centered.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf., Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, (Penguin, 2006); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, (Norton, 2004); Christopher Hitchens, *god is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, (Twelve, 2007).

The Introduction of the book reveals the driving theory behind Perry's investigation, namely that wisdom is tied to the Creation story in the early chapters of Genesis. Perry believes wisdom passages display a "transfer from divine to human creativity" which was recorded "from the very beginning of the Hebrew Bible and remained a focus throughout (p. xvii)."

Fittingly, the first unit of *God's Twilight Zone* (Chapters 1-3) is called "Creating and Maintaining a Righteous World." These chapters illuminate the contrast between the "righteous" and the "wicked" within specific pericopae found in Genesis and Exodus. Perry argues that the "righteous" display their wisdom by preserving life, maintaining order, and appropriating other ideals put forth in the early chapters of Genesis. The "wicked," however, prove by their destruction to be the antithesis of such ideals and of wisdom itself.

The second unit (Chapters 4-7) is called "Interpreting the Twilight Zone." Chapters 4-6 focus, respectively, on passages about Samson, Saul, and Solomon. Chapter 7 examines Psalm 1 with the intent of going beyond its typical "wisdom" classification toward actually hammering out its ramifications for righteousness and wisdom development. In this unit the author utilizes these particular wisdom texts to investigate the literary nature of such pericopae and to display the complexities involved in interpreting them.

The third and final unit (Chapters 8 and 9) is called "The Rebirth of Vulnerability and Wonder." Chapter 8 examines the closing chapter of Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) and focuses on living righteously and contentedly in this present world albeit with an awareness of its transience. Chapter 9 examines Proverbs 30:18-19, focusing particularly on the phrase, "the way of a man with a young woman." These chapters essentially deal with the wisdom of enjoying creation within God's parameters for joy. A brief conclusion to the work follows Chapter 9.

Readers need to be aware, maybe even wary, of Perry's presuppositions. He seems (I use the word "seems" because Perry himself can be quite ambiguous) to believe that wisdom is a late development in Israel's history. He sees wisdom as a movement to fill the void left by the gradual, steady decrease of prophetic activity (see esp. pp. 174ff.). If wisdom is "late," (yet Perry finds the influence of wisdom on texts in the Torah), then the reader is left to assume that Perry is still clutching to aspects of the outdated (yet difficult to slay) Documentary Hypothesis or a more radical view of the Torah's redaction. Although that argument may seem to be a slippery slope, Perry's failure to clarify his presuppositions leaves the reader out of necessity in such a wary posture. Also, Perry may find too much authority in extra-biblical sources. For instance, he asks the reader, "did not Abraham, in a world full of idols and violence, discover God on his own and with his own powers (p. 174)?" Here Perry is citing midrashic tradition as authoritative, not the Bible. Does he believe it to be on par with scripture? His ambiguity strikes again. On the one hand Perry engages rabbinic thought throughout the book as he tackles difficult texts, and the reader has much to glean from his efforts. On the other hand, he consistently treats these extra-biblical texts as authoritative, although the reader cannot say for sure whether Perry believes them to be so or not. He probably crosses the boundary between letting these sources inform the interpreter of scripture and placing them on par with scripture.

Another criticism of the book is that Perry can be guilty of the “overload fallacy,” or the tendency to cram all possible meanings of a word or phrase into one specific occurrence in the text (this common fallacy goes by several more technical names). In Chapter 3, for example, Perry investigates at length the meaning of *alah* in Exodus 1:10. Perry succeeds in displaying the ambiguous nature of this word, and is right to investigate all of its possible meanings, but he fallaciously tries to apply every meaning to this one instance. It is one thing to interact with ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible, but it is another matter entirely to cram every meaning of a word into a single occurrence.

While the book has faults, I must say that it is a fascinating and worthwhile read. Those seeking to learn the basics of the wisdom genre should look elsewhere, for this book is not an introduction to wisdom. It is, however, a text-centered book that is brutally honest about the ambiguity of the Hebrew language and forthright in its challenges to conventional views of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. Observing Perry’s investigative method will help any student of scripture delve more deeply into the Hebrew Bible. I suspect future commentaries will begin interacting with Perry’s keen and penetrating treatment of certain texts within this book, much like they do with groundbreaking scholarly articles. I recommend *God’s Twilight Zone – Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible* as a challenging and stimulating read for students of scripture. It is one of those rare works which, although displaying certain phrases and presuppositions with which conservative evangelicals will be at odds, will benefit and expand the careful and attentive reader.

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*X-rays for Archaeology*. By Masayuki Uda, Guy Demortier, and Izumi Nakai, eds. Netherlands: Springer, 2005, pp., 308, \$189.00, Hardcover.

*X-rays for Archaeology* is a compilation of papers selected from the First International Symposium on X-Ray Archaeometry. The symposium took place in Tokyo, Japan in July, 2002. The aim of the symposium was to provide a platform for discussing results of experimental X-ray-based analyses of archaeological artifacts. Uda, Demortier, and Nakai have included twenty-four such papers from that symposium. The sections of the book are: Part I “In-Situ Measurements,” Part II “Use of Ion Beam,” Part III “Use of Synchrotron Radiation,” Part IV “Radiography,” Part V “Interdisciplinary Field between Art and Science.”

Throughout the book, great care has been taken to include the meticulous detail. To differing degrees, all the authors have included sections pertaining to their instrumentation, the settings of such instruments, and the rationale for the experiment/study. The essay “PIXE Study on Chinese Underglaze-Red Porcelain Made in Yuan Dynasty” by Cheng, Zhang, Lin, and Huang is typical. The article itself is very brief but illustrated with in-depth charts and tables. They explain their experiment using very technical terminology. They write,

Experiments were performed at the Institute of Modern Physics, Fudan University, Shanghai. External-beam PIXE was carried out for all samples using the 9SDH-2 beam line of the 3.0MeV tandem accelerator. Samples were placed at 10mm outside the beam exit window (7.5 $\mu$ m Kapton). After passing through the Kapton film and air, 2.8MeV protons with beam current of 0.05-0.5 nA hit the sample with a small spot of size 1mm in diameter. The induced x-rays were detected using an ORTEC Si(Li) detector with an energy resolution of 165eV (FWHM) at 5.9KeV. (p.152)

One can easily see the technological detail included in the work. The results sections of each article are just as thorough.

Also included in each article is a section of conclusions which attempts to disclose the application of the results. For instance, in "Characterization of Pigments Used in Ancient Egypt," Uda writes,

We confirmed that portable XRF (X-ray fluorescence), XRD (X-ray diffraction), ED-XRDF (energy dispersive X-ray diffraction and fluorescence) systems can be used very effectively to investigate pigments on monuments under non-destructive and non-contact conditions in the field. It is also highly probable that these portable systems can be used to study surfaces of other monuments in the field without difficulty. These methods may supply important information necessary for the conservation and restoration of the unique monuments of the world. (p. 24)

The most inherent weakness of *X-rays for Archaeology* is its very technical nature. The publishers insist that the book was written for professional and student archaeologists, among others like museologists, natural scientists, physicists, etc. Yet, the reader is faced with technical terms which only the X-ray scholar or student would understand without additional study. Admittedly, I am not an X-ray scholar, nor am I an X-ray student. My degree is in archaeology and Old Testament. But, that is exactly the point. As someone who continuously reads archaeological and biblical studies, I found very little common ground with this work. The problem was not the lack of professionalism or sloppy scholarship. No, exactly the opposite was true. The disappointment came from the work being so technically aimed toward the X-ray audience. The issue seems to be a lack of an agreed upon body of language, terms, and goals between these X-ray scholars and their intended audience—archaeologists.

While slowly working through the technical sections of the book, I eagerly anticipated the time when the author would tell how his or her particular work would be beneficial in archaeology. But, time and again I was met with the lack of applicable uses. The authors admirably demonstrated how mobile and inobtrusive X-ray can be. Yet, the uses of X-ray as presented in this book seems confined to determining provenance, particle make-up, paint or pottery composition, and conservation. All of these are certainly worthy uses, but only in limited and specific cases. It is difficult to imagine archaeologists needing the technology presented in *X-rays for Archaeology* on a daily basis, perhaps even

on a yearly basis. The use of X-ray technology presented in *X-rays for Archaeology* appears to be for a specialized needs basis.

*X-rays for Archaeology* is a scholarly work intended to be read by other scholars. Its price of \$189 (U.S.) will assure that the book will only be on the shelves of the most ardent students and scholars. The book is not a “must have”

or “must read” for archaeologists or students of archaeology. The individual articles could be helpful in specific situations. But on the whole, the work lacks a strong connection with archaeology, especially field archaeology.

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*Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality.* By W. David Buschart. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006, 373 pp., \$21.00

Dr. Buschart’s stated intention for his book is to help those people who stand outside the Christian tradition to come to a better understanding of the Christian faith, especially its Protestant variety, by becoming more familiar with its landscape as seen through the lenses of eight major strands of Protestant thought. Additionally, and this is where the book is most clearly aimed, the book seeks to foster a hospitality between the various theological traditions, not by reducing each tradition to some common denominator to which each can then ascribe, but instead by giving a fair reading to each tradition so as to understand both the historical formation and the main theological emphases of each. It is to this end that the book does not seek to engage in a polemical debate with each tradition, or to compare and contrast one tradition over against another. Quite the opposite is the case. Dr. Buschart has set as an agenda to be “primarily descriptive and affirmative rather than polemical or defensive.” It is in fact an invitation to theological hospitality as the subtitle states.

The eight traditions that are surveyed in the book are the Reformed, Lutheran, Wesleyan, Baptist, Anglican, Anabaptist, Pentecostal and Dispensational. Each tradition is dealt with in its own self contained chapter. Each chapter stands alone with no connections between the traditions so that each chapter serves as a general introduction to the tradition under consideration. Each chapter follows the same structural approach in which the historical and ecclesiastical background is presented first. The story of each tradition is traced from its founders, through its establishment as it was passed on from generation to the next, to the diversity that has resulted in the tradition over time. Having established the context of the tradition the book then treats the theological and hermeneutical method employed by the tradition. In this area the emphasis is laid upon the more scholarly writers within each tradition, instead of what is taking place in the local congregations. It is therefore more of a review of the traditions academic method and production. Having established both the context and the method, the chapter ends by highlighting two of the major distinctions of the tradition. For example, within Lutheranism justification and the sacraments are treated, while within the Baptist tradition it is ecclesiology and baptism which are highlighted. Each chapter then ends with a brief conclusion that seeks to encapsulate the major ethos of the tradition.

Overall the book does a commendable job of giving an introduction to each tradition. One of the book's strengths in this regard is also one of its weaknesses. Each tradition is allowed to speak for itself as regards its major theological emphases. While this allows the reader to see what that tradition holds as its most important tenets, it does not allow the reader an opportunity to see the diversity of views that exists between the traditions on particular subjects. While this approach may be more conducive to a hospitable dialogue in that there is a less likely chance that any of the traditions will have to go head to head over a difference within their respective tradition, it does not foster the type of deep hospitality that is able to confront those issues in which the various traditions find themselves in pointed disagreement in a manner that does not turn into vitriol, but instead results in being able to agree to disagree in Christian love.

Dr. Buschart lives up to his agenda of seeking to not be polemical, but instead to be descriptive and affirming. Each chapter is saturated with primary sources from the tradition under consideration, with minimal commentary by the author. It is only in the final chapter that Dr. Buschart reveals that he is within the Reformed tradition himself, and he not does reveal this in order to advocate for the Reformed position, but instead to urge believers to gain a deeper understanding of each tradition in order to foster dialog that is based upon a spirit of hospitality and not antagonism. While the call to Christian hospitality is a call that we should heed, Dr. Buschart issues a warning that responding to the call raises two dangers. The first is that identity crises can be created. As one begins to investigate, dialog, and partner with other traditions there might be a tendency to water down the distinctives that are foundational for one's tradition. Also, there is a risk of division within one's own tradition as people react against the dialog and cooperation that has begun. While both risks are real, Dr. Buschart advocates a Christian hospitality that is marked by both differentiation and embrace. He is not calling for a reduction of the distinctives between the traditions, but instead is calling for each tradition to retain its identity as it seeks to embrace those aspects of the other tradition.

The book accomplishes its agenda of offering Christian hospitality, but the conversation cannot end where the book leaves it. On its own, *Exploring Protestant Traditions*, leaves the reader with no method to judge between the various traditions. One is left with no clear choice regarding what should be the criterion of truth that judges between each tradition. For example, when describing the "Oneness" movement within Pentecostalism there is no indication of the theological dangers of rejecting the Trinity, or any mention of its historically unorthodox position that would bring in to question its very inclusion within the broader Christian tradition to which the book seeks to appeal. In addition to the desire to be hospitable, one must also be willing to state what is the touchstone of his tradition, whether it is experience, the Bible, or the tradition itself. Until one has established the basis for judging between the differences, it would be difficult to enter into a dialog that progressed very far. If people disagree over the final authority in a dispute, the most that can be hoped for is a polite handshake and cordiality.

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