

**BULLETIN OF
ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY**

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**Essays on the Doctrine
of Creation**

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EDITORIAL

God has spoken. Therefore there is a world. God is one and unchangeably the same. Therefore his Word and his world cohere. Because we live as sinners in a world scarred by the Fall, the truths of God's world, and their relationship to the truths of his Word, are often far from clear to us. And yet, because the Father made the world by his Word and Spirit, he loves it. And so, in their saving missions, he has pledged to redeem it. Moreover, by those same missions God has shed abroad the knowledge of his truth to his redeemed people.

Together these convictions underwrite an evangelical concern for a right understanding of the relationship between Biblical teaching and created reality. They also indicate the need for pastors to think carefully and prayerfully about these issues. It is to this end that this latest edition of the *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* is offered.

As with earlier editions, the articles originated as papers presented at the Center for Pastor Theologians' three annual Fellowship Symposia. The 2016 Symposia were funded by a generous grant from the Templeton Foundation and focused on the relationship of Christianity and science. We are grateful to the various scholars who acted as guest consultants: Robert Bishop, John and Madeleine McIntyre Endowed Professor of Philosophy and History of Science at Wheaton College; Michael Murray, Senior Vice President of the John Templeton Foundation; Jeff Schloss, T.B. Walker Chair of Natural and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Center for Faith, Ethics & Life Sciences; Ted Davis, Professor of the History of Science, Messiah College; and Robin Collins, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Messiah College.

The articles build out from this focus on Christianity and science to consider various theological and pastoral aspects of scientific endeavor and also to explore Biblical, doctrinal, and ethical matters more broadly as they arise from and lead to engagement with God's creation. The articles offer a variety of perspectives and approaches, but with a common commitment to thinking evangelically about the relationship between God's Word and his world.

In this issue, Volume 4.2, Jarrod Longbons (Third Fellowship) offers an anti-modern theological gift to ecology, drawing on a Radical Orthodoxy-inflected theological account of nature, while, in an

interesting counterpoint, Jeremy Mann (CPT Director of Programming and Development) offers two essays. The first unweaves the tapestry of a sacramental ontology to argue for the doctrinal and pastoral advantages of a Calvinian account of creation. And in a second related piece, Mann offers a charitable critique of Dillon Thornton's essay "Consecrated Creation" from *BET* Volume 4.1. Finally, in a couple of articles oriented more to pastoral theology and ethics, Matthew Mason (Second Fellowship) explores what nature and Scripture reveal about the reality and meaning of the twofold form of our humanity as male and female, and Benjamin Espinoza (Third Fellowship) argues for the importance of engaging professionals working in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields within the life of the church.

The sheer range and complexity of the issues that arise from scientific and technological exploration can be overwhelming. Thankfully, pastors are not called to become experts in these matters. We are not responsible to our scientific age. We are responsible to God, as ministers of his Word. However, we are to be responsible *in* the world in which God has placed us, for the sake of his name and for the good of his people. This edition of *BET* attempts such responsible stewardship. It does not pretend to approximate the breadth of reflection needed. Instead, in keeping with the CPT's mission to provide theological reflection from the church for the church, it offers a snapshot of what thoughtful evangelical engagement with God's creation might look like, as a stimulus to ongoing prayerful reflection on these and other topics.

Rev. Matthew Mason
Christ Church, Salisbury, UK
Article Editor

“I SEEN A BETTER WORLD”: THEOLOGY’S GIFT TO ECOLOGY

JARROD M. LONGBONS¹

Why does nature vie with itself?

Private Edward P. Train, *The Thin Red Line*

At first glance Terrence Malick’s film *The Thin Red Line*² is about a WWII battle; reconsidered, it is about ubiquitous violence. As the question is posed, a crocodile prowls for prey; as the film widens, it shows that humanity is the greatest killer in the world. The screen fills with images of maimed humans, animals, and a burning countryside resulting from human conflict. Strikingly, Malick presents a world replete with violence, with humans at the center, not segregated from nature. War is his filmic setting to explore human domination, though the issue is not limited to war. Consider the ecological crisis. Indeed, environmental studies are predicated on human dominance over nonhuman life. Is this human nature? Is domination artificial? These Malickesque questions are paramount if one is to understand something as complex as the ecological crisis.

Many will find Malick’s contentious cosmology hard to swallow, a bit nihilistic. But understood properly, this film offers one step out of a nihilistic trap arising from the modern project. Admittedly, human violence is a truth of history, but ecological crises are novel. I am not suggesting that there have never been ecological problems, but that today’s crisis—the possibility and scale of degradation as such—has never been realized before our time. The ideology allowing such an unprecedented level of anthropogenic ecological degradation is the modern constitution: nature-culture dualism. Modernism (as well as forms of existentialism³) is predicated on a “purified”⁴ ontology, a world of two worlds—human

¹ Jarrod Longbons is the Senior Minister of Peachtree Christian Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

² *The Thin Red Line*, Fox, 1998, written and directed by Terrence Malick.

³ On existentialism’s tendency to disconnect and thus prioritize the human world over that of “nature,” see Hans Jonas, “Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism,” *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

⁴ This is Bruno Latour’s term for the modern impulse to categorize and thus segregate into opposing spheres in *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-13. The irony, according to Latour, is that “modern” attempts at purification also result in hybridization, revealing something beyond dualism.

subjects and natural objects. Malick steps out by including humans within nature. Culture is, after all, natural.⁵ By this I mean that culture is a product of what is natural to the human creature, regardless of the fact that it evolves through time. Added to this is also the fact that culture is found, to a certain extent, in nonhuman creatures such as primates, dolphins, and bees.

Though Malick bypasses the dualism, the problem is not fully overcome. What is nature? And how is culture natural? More reflection on the similarity and dissimilarity between humans and nonhumans is required, for the ecological crisis itself implies that human making is not always natural.⁶

Dualism arms Western society with a destructive ideology, and though rejections of the constitution abound, for example, with versions of ecological monism proffered by Deep Ecology etc., scarcely have any been effective in ameliorating the crisis. But neither have they subverted modernity's tendency for dualism, because ecological monism does not account for the uniqueness of human life. In light of this, theology offers a gift to ecology: renewed faith in creation. Though creation is not a new concept, expression of creation must be renewed, because it too has been obscured under the hegemony of modernity. New ontological models, epistemologies, or modes of signification are unnecessary because the idea of creation itself accounts for all life and prescribes a human mode of relating to nature that does more than merely sustain it; rather, it promotes the flourishing of all things. In what follows, this essay will demonstrate the power that ideas have in shaping ecological realities. First to be considered will be the idea of modern dualism and how it quite simply reduces nonhumanity to a field of usable objects. And then we will explore the ambiguous worldview of ecologism—as it does away with both “nature,” and “culture” by reducing both down into an ontological “sameness.” Then, finally, as a counter to both approaches, the doctrine of creation will be explored in order to demonstrate that it has many intellectual gifts to offer a world in ecological crisis. Quite simply, this exercise will show that creation is a better view of the world, for it accounts for both: humanity and nonhumanity as they make up and share in a reciprocal ontology, given by God and for God's good ends.

⁵ Ironically, the word *culture* derives from *cultivation*. The cultured one was, at one time, the one who cultivated the land. Now it means the cultivation of the inner self via film, theater, literature, religion, laws, art, technology, domestication, etc.

⁶ Ecologically, there are many criticisms of technology. Though varied in their criticisms see John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2008); Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003); Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008); and John Bellamy Foster, *Ecology Against Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002).

I. NATURE-CULTURE DUALISM: THE CAUSE OF ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Nature-culture dualism is a broadened form of other dualisms.⁷ Metaphysically, it is based on Descartes's dichotomy between *res cogitans* (thinking subject) and *res extensa* (extended object).⁸ Constructed epistemologically, things are held at a distance, allowing for human investigation. As a result, humans become "lords and possessors of nature."⁹

What Descartes did for metaphysics, Bacon did for scientific praxis. Bacon sought to investigate nature, to find its secrets,¹⁰ under a method of torture.¹¹ Gísli Pálsson says, "the Baconian imagery of sexual assault, of 'entering and penetrating...holes and corners,' is a recurrent one."¹² Pálsson suggests that "human-environmental interactions" happen "by means of an aggressive, sexual idiom; nature appears as a seductive but troublesome female."¹³ For this reason, much reflection on the dualism locates the feminine with "nature" and the masculine with "culture."¹⁴

Modernity results in "promethean"¹⁵ exploitation. It is no accident, then, that modernity was the most colonialist time in human history.¹⁶ Formed by dualism, Westerners were thought of as the "cultured" ones while indigenous peoples were "natural"; the Western burden was to "civilize the savages" while mining their world for resources.¹⁷

⁷ Mind-body, subject-object, individual-society, masculine-feminine, etc.

⁸ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation II (New York: BN Publishing, 2007), 81-88.

⁹ Descartes, *Meditations*, 50.

¹⁰ Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 120.

¹¹ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*; <http://www.constitution.org/bacon/nov_org.htm> [accessed: 3/17/2012]; see Hadot's translation of Bacon in *The Veil of Isis*, 120.

¹² Gísli Pálsson, "Human-Environment Relations: Orientalism, Paternalism, and Communalism," in *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson (London: Routledge, 1996), 68. In this passage Pálsson is citing Bacon through Bordo's work.

¹³ Gísli Pálsson, "Human-Environment Relations: Orientalism, Paternalism, and Communalism," 68.

¹⁴ See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1994).

¹⁵ This is Hadot's term for human triumphalist attitudes over "nature," no matter what era one is considering.

¹⁶ Albert Borgmann suggests that Columbus's voyage to the new world (along with the work of Copernicus and Luther), was one of the major events that broke from medievalism and into modernity, in *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 21. For the ecological effects of Columbus's voyage see Charles C. Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (New York: Knopf, 2011). This work shows how things such as earthworms and mosquitoes entered into new worlds where they never existed before and how they changed entire ecosystems.

¹⁷ For a fascinating study on how the imperialist social imagination has affected Africa, see Emmanuel Katangole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

Consequently, dualism offers humans a higher standing because they are subjective, sentient, and capable of creating worlds (the problem is how this higher standing is understood). This prioritization mixed with growing technological populations is a recipe for exploitation. Dualism must be outflanked¹⁸ if we are going to navigate an ecological age, for “a recurring criticism is that the nature-society dichotomy hinders true ecological understanding.”¹⁹

II. THE END OF NATURE

Dualism, as of late, has come under heavy scrutiny. Furthermore, the crisis, though a cause for concern, is a genuine gift to thought because it unveils many inconsistencies. Consider Bruno Latour’s disposal of the modern myth of progress. Moderns believe in a flow of time pressing toward an enlightened future: “I have this strange fantasy that the modernist hero never actually looked toward the future but always to the past, the archaic past that he was fleeing in terror.”²⁰ Modernity is preoccupied with emancipation—it races along always looking to the past, staying ahead of what it wished to break away from. The onward march of the modern “is flying backward” and thus “not seeing the destruction”²¹ that is caused by this “progress” in time. Recently, however, “a conversion, a *metanoia* of sorts,”²² has occurred: the modern person “has suddenly realized how much catastrophe his development has left behind him. The ecological crisis is nothing but the sudden turning around of someone who had actually never before looked into the future, so busy was he extricating himself from a horrible past.”²³

This crisis causes human collectives to ask if there are better modes of relating to other collectives.²⁴ One such response is Timothy Morton’s *Ecology Without Nature*. For Morton, dualism is founded upon the modern, out-of-date notion of “nature”:

Nature is an ideological construct...like an eighteenth-century “antiquated” tool...a regressive tool, a fantasy of some reified thing

¹⁸ Two obvious examples of modernity’s ecological failure can be cited here. First is the failed climate summit of Copenhagen in 2009. Faced with mounting evidence, the world’s leaders were unable to overcome national interests in order to put a plan into action. Simply, this event secured the separation between and thus primacy of humans over nonhumans. Second, in his attempt to clinch the Republican nomination for the presidency in 2012, Rick Santorum accused President Obama of promoting a “phony theology” because of the Obama administration’s stance against drilling for oil. Santorum accused Obama of prioritizing the environment over human life. Dualism persists, at least, in American politics. This case is also interesting because Santorum is a committed Catholic, thus demonstrating the need for more theological and ecclesiological engagements with ecology.

¹⁹ Pálsson and Descola, *Nature and Society*, 3.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” *New Literary History* 41 (2010): 471-90, at 485.

²¹ Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” 485.

²² Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” 486.

²³ Latour, “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto,’” 486.

²⁴ Such as “nature,” the “environment,” or whatever moniker one prefers.

that's always "over there" in the wild blue yonder, to fix something that is decidedly here, something—namely capitalism—that even abolishes concepts of "here" and "there" in its globalizing permanent revolution.²⁵

The problem is not in the word but its meaning. "Nature" is politically ideological, an aesthetic, Romantic construction hoping to preserve nature from capitalistic usury. Morton rejects this ideology because aesthetic concern fades in the shadow of contemporary addiction to capital. Additionally, a realm "over there" does not exist. Morton writes, "as we encounter an ecological age we are realizing that absolutely everything is absolutely connected to absolutely everything else."²⁶ Consider DNA:

DNA itself isn't very DNA-ish. It's a loose hybrid of codons, some of which are viral code insertions that can't strictly be demarcated from non-viral ones. No codon is more 'authentic' than any other. This is symbiosis, one of the other implications of interconnectedness—of course we know that we share our bodies with bacterial symbionts, some of which are hiding in our cells in refuge from one of the first global environmental catastrophes, the one called oxygen. These are mitochondria, which supply us with energy. But in your DNA there's also a retrovirus called ERV-3 that may well code for immunosuppressive properties of the placental barrier. You are reading this because a virus in your mom's DNA made her body not allergic to you. Since there's less of me, what counts as "my" rights in particular? What counts as anyone's rights? Does DNA have rights?²⁷

Beings are more connected than assumed by modernity. Put simply, if a human were locked in a sterile room, she would still coexist with countless other life-forms in various symbiotic relationships. This means that the biosphere is not self-identical. Nor are objects distanced from subjects. Considering the entities that make up a subject, it becomes unclear how to define one or to locate where it begins or ends.²⁸

Segregation is near impossible. Consider genotype and phenotype: "the entire biosphere is the phenotypical expression of various life forms' genomes."²⁹ Morton asks, "where does a beaver's DNA stop? At the ends

²⁵ Timothy Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," *Polygraph* 22 (2010): 46-59, at 47.

²⁶ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 47

²⁷ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 48.

²⁸ Morton writes, "the biosphere is much less self-identical that we like to think—much less 'natural' as a matter of fact. There isn't a little picture of me in my DNA; my DNA can be told to produce viruses—that's how viruses replicate. Genomics is now able to use a virus to tell bacterial DNA to make plastic rather than bacteria. This openness and ungroundedness has another side which is intimacy. Symbiosis means that we've got others, and others have got us, literally under our skin. I think it would be better to base an ecological ethics and politics on these facts rather than on a construct such as nature." Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 48.

²⁹ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 48.

of its whiskers? Or at the end of its dam? What about the spider's web?"³⁰ Nature does not exist. It is nowhere to be found. And neither can we find "environment;" Morton dubs it "nature 2.0." Environment is a background for an entity living in the foreground, but if the world is "life forms all the way down," then there is no background. That is to say, the background of one entity is a foreground for another and so on. Another problem is that the term environment, like nature, reeks of balanced harmony, but for Morton, as well as Slavoj Žižek, the environment is one series of destructive events after another.³¹ If there is no nature, then it follows that there is no environment either.

If nature calls for ethical-aesthetics, then environment calls for rights theory. But "rights language doesn't quite work here, because it's not entirely obvious where to draw a boundary line around a life-form, either in space or in evolutionary time, by saying 'this is where you are, this you'—which seems like a minimal condition for ascribing rights to something or someone."³² These ideologies are "ethic-less." They imply a free market capitalist sense of balance; if we leave it alone, which we cannot, it will simply work itself out.³³

Morton offers a new way of conceptualizing the issue that his neologism "mesh" expresses. Mesh is the inextricably linked-up world of life-forms, defined symbiotically. It "is very different from the web of life, and also from any poststructuralist or posthuman upgrades of web-of-life organicism," because "you can't squish the mesh."³⁴ The mesh is comprised of individual entities or actants,³⁵ which Morton calls strange strangers. He writes, "these beings are ineradicably, irreducibly strange, strange in their strangeness, strange all the way down, surprisingly surprising."³⁶ All life-forms subsist *on, in, with, and because* of others. When a sentient

³⁰ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 48.

³¹ For Žižek's account of "the environment as a series of catastrophes," see his reflection on oil in "Censorship Today: Violence or Ecology as a New Opium for the Masses"; <<http://www.lacan.com/zizecology1.htm>> [accessed: 3/19/2012]. Here we see Žižek's typical reductive stance toward things. Yes, our world is promoted by the death and destruction of species, but what about life that arises from it? We must balance both truths of the world if we are going to affirm anything at all.

³² Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 48.

³³ Morton writes, "nature, like the market, is a set of algorithmic processes that just seem to work by themselves. This kind of mystification edits out anything like human agency. I'm dead set against arguing that Nature has rights, because that would mean that it's some kind of autonomous being, and we've had enough of that sort of language, thank you very much." Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 50.

³⁴ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 54.

³⁵ Latour defines an *actant* through science studies this way: "instead of starting with entities that are already components of the world, science studies focuses on the complex and controversial nature of what it is for an actor to come into existence. The key is to define the actor by what it does—its performances—under laboratory trials. Later its competence is deduced and made part of an institution. Since the English word 'actor' is often limited to humans, the world 'actant,' borrowed from semiotics, is sometimes used to include nonhumans in the definition." Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 303.

³⁶ Morton, "Ecology after Capitalism," 54.

being discovers strangers in the midst, they are strange because of their normalcy. The more one understands viruses, bacteria, and trees, the stranger they become because they are no longer seen as isolated things; their being is inexorably tied up with other beings. Consequently, Morton ceases using terms like "animal" or "non-human": all beings are strange strangers. So, he asks "what is life," "what is a person," and "is a human a person?"

Mesh ethics is called "dark ecology." Dark ecology is developed on the basis that humans are sentient beings resulting from the mesh itself. Without appeals to action, dark ecology solicits humans to sit and reflect on the mesh; realizing one's own enmeshment ought to bring ethical action.

Will Morton's theory work? It suits Malick's vision of human "naturalness." Also it rejects dualisms, thereby exposing the ideology of nature. Therefore, we can praise *Ecology without Nature*, but not without hesitation. Does anything give mesh being? Morton's theory is a helpful, anti-ideological expression, but without a transcendent, guarantor of value, can there be any value beyond self-preservation? Does self-preservation serve the parts or the whole? Can he account for both equally? Ambiguities abound, causing a lack in his ethical prescriptions; one is to act because she is "enmeshed," but how does this overcome territorial impulses? Morton's view is reductive, radically beyond "missing the forest for the trees." Morton misses the tree for the virus; thus his logic is ironically too individualistic; he can scarcely give integrity to a whole composite of entities such as a tree or human.³⁷ A problem with Morton's thought emerges because, "if the mesh can't be squished," then what makes humans unique from other life-forms? Simply, humans are the same as everything else. Morton, at best, is ambiguously humanistic. His vision only overcomes nature-culture by reducing everything to nature.

Meaning is the mesh. But if life is a mesh of life-forms "all the way down," what's the *telos* of a particular life-form? A *telos* is necessary for

³⁷ True, Morton's theory attempts to account for radical reciprocity between beings, and as such it seems more "communal" than individualistic. The problem is a subtle one, for it arises with the force in which he breaks entities down to smaller bits and parts. He does this to challenge ideological constructs, but left in the wake are composite beings like humans, and he seems to have little to say about them. Morton's vision, if I may offer an illustration, is like a fly-fishing rig called the hopper dropper. The hopper dropper works when one has two flies on the end of a line. One fly is submerged, and the other is a dry-fly on the water's surface. The rig's *raison d'être* is to maximize the opportunity to catch pan fish. The method cannot be broken down into the sum of its parts; it must be held together, for they are tied together. Morton's view is like focusing solely on the submerged midge fly which is necessary because it is integral to the whole method. But he does not account for the dry-fly that keeps the whole rig together. Both elements are necessary for optimal angling. Likewise, both the individual entities of life as well as the composite beings together make up reality. Yes, humans are made up of countless symbiotic life-forms, but they are still humans. This is the goal of mesh theory, but its forcefulness lies more with the bits than with the whole, ironically. What can we make of the mesh when it merges to make something complicated, moral, and even spiritual? There is still something about the composite of beings that make up a human that is different from other composites. Morton knows this and is scarcely able to conceive of human beings.

ethical action. Are there humans? It seems so. Then what is their end? Certainly, maternal retroviruses end in procreation; it seems that even the smallest life-form serves some end besides membership in the mesh. Maybe it is the promotion of life. Whatever the case, without *telos*, mesh is nothing more than a series of parasitic life-forms all the way down. His argument risks absurdity. Or as Bulgakov posits:

What, then, is the purpose and meaning of human life overall? This is the question which unavoidably prescribes for man what is his human worth; without some kind of answer to this question, we cannot fruitfully set ourselves to any employment, whether economics, technology or medicine. For what gives life an overall meaning also makes sense of and fulfills any particular task.³⁸

In sum, Morton's logic rests firmly within the tradition of immanentism and modern *teleological* obscurity.³⁹ Spaemann says that teleology was "what modern science denied to its object..." because of "the desire to acquire an unlimited mastery over nature."⁴⁰ Morton even denies *telos* within evolution.⁴¹

III. INTERLUDE: ANTHROPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DUALISM

We were a family. How'd it break up and come apart, so that now we're turned against each other? Each standing in the other's light. How'd we lose that good that was given us? Let it slip away. Scattered it, careless. What's keepin' us from reaching out, touching the glory?

Private Witt, *The Thin Red Line*

Also in Malick's film is Private Witt. AWOL, Witt is first seen in an Edenic indigenous community in the South Pacific. It is a community of "kinship relations," extended to humans and nonhumans alike. Witt is enchanted; but his idyll is interrupted by retrieving soldiers. With no time for court-martial, Witt is forced to fight in the battle of Guadalcanal. Battle-ward, yet reminiscent of his idyll, an officer exclaims to Witt, "this

³⁸ Sergii Bulgakov, "The Economic Ideal," in *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology*, trans. and ed. Rowan Williams (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 39.

³⁹ See Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). For Glacken one considerable problem is how language such as "cause," "efficient cause," "final cause," "teleology," and "design" have all been changed and simplified throughout history.

⁴⁰ Robert Spaemann, "Natur," in David Schindler, ed. and trans., *Philosophische Essays*, 3. Not yet published; used by permission of the translator. Originally published, Stuttgart: Phillip Reclam, 1994, 19-37.

⁴¹ Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 44.

is the real world," to which Witt responds, "I seen a better world." What did he see? A peaceful, non-modern society.

Premodern Scandinavians,⁴² the Cree,⁴³ even contemporary indigenous peoples⁴⁴ view human and nonhuman relationships reciprocally.⁴⁵ The mode of relations is kinship. The Western constitution, however, promotes a competitive view of human beings, *bellum omnium contra omnes*.⁴⁶ Marshall Sahlins says, "I claim it is a specifically Western metaphysics, for it supposes an opposition between nature and culture that is distinctive of our own folklore—and to many peoples who consider that beasts are basically human rather than humans basically beasts."⁴⁷ This folklore defines humans by *libido dominandi*—humans are brutes who exploit others and the earth.⁴⁸ Isn't this Malick's point? To a degree, but he is also cognizant of Sahlins's other notion: there are other people enacting another story, seeing others as kin, one offering nonhumans personhood.

Kinship is a mutual relationship of being. Kinsmen are members of one another. Their mutuality may be a sameness of being, as among brothers or descendants of a common ancestor; or it may entail belonging to one another in a reciprocal and complementary relationship, as between husband and wife. In any case, the relationship to the other, and in that sense other himself or herself, is intrinsic to one's own existence.⁴⁹

Bodies are social bodies, belonging to others and to other beings. Sahlins continues, "as enchanted as our universe may still be, it is also still ordered by a distinction of culture and nature that is evident to virtually no one else but ourselves."⁵⁰ If any enchantment exists, ours is stunted by dualism, a minority view the world over.⁵¹

⁴² Pålsson, "Human-Environmental Relations," 74.

⁴³ Marshall Sahlins, *The Western Illusion of Human Nature* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2008), 88.

⁴⁴ Sahlins, *Western Illusion*, 48.

⁴⁵ See Pålsson's notion of "generalized reciprocity" in his presentation of anthropological "communalism," especially as it is different from modern "orientalist" and "paternalist" societies, in "Human-Environmental Relations," 63-81.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 189.

⁴⁷ Sahlins, *Western Illusion*, 2.

⁴⁸ Therefore, humans are in need of *Leviathan* to quell their thirst for dominance. Social Contract via government now mediates relations in the Western world because without such mediation, it is believed, humans will destroy one another. This is premised on Hobbes's "state of nature," and though contrary to Rousseau's Edenic "state of nature" it is still the one that influenced Adams and other American founders' political philosophy.

⁴⁹ Sahlins, *Western Illusion*, 46. Kinship is witnessed in hunter-gatherer societies even in their ideas about hunting. In many cases the verb "to hunt" means to communicate or even to make love with other beings. Kinship does not, then, imply that other creatures are not used or consumed; rather it changes the way in which one uses or consumes them.

⁵⁰ Sahlins, *Western Illusion*, 88.

⁵¹ Sahlins, quoting Descola: "The manner in which the modern Occident represents nature is the one thing in the world least widely shared. In numerous regions of the planet,

True, *The Thin Red Line* places humans within the drama of “nature,” for we kill, dominate and contend with others. But it also offers a counter-social story: kinship. Western anthropology, to the contrary, does more to *prescribe* human action than *describe* it. This is Malick’s leitmotif in subsequent films; *The New World*⁵² and *Tree of Life*.⁵³ In the latter, Mrs. O’Brien reports, “The nuns taught us there were two ways through life—the way of nature and the way of grace. You have to choose which one you’ll follow.”⁵⁴ In this film, the way of nature has little to do with trees, etc. The way of nature is one of self-assertion, competition, and dominance. The way of grace is play—with humans, bugs, birds, etc.—filled with laughter, delight, and joy. Moderns are taught that they are naturally competitive beasts and therefore have constructed a society as such.

Malick, like Sahlins, has no time for these illusions. The world isn’t segregated; all its parts are connected symbiotically. Moreover, dualistic views are in the minority. There are countless societal examples where “the creature is not only in its environment but of it,” where “the relationship between creature and environment is *mutually formative*.”⁵⁵

Modernity denuded both concepts of the human and nonhuman. And how one imagines the human is indissolubly linked with ideas about the nonhuman and vice versa. Hence, theology must enter. Creation is the “metaphysical middle term”⁵⁶ between nature and culture, placing everything categorically under dependence. As such, creation agrees much with *Ecology without Nature*; yet it escapes its ambiguous characteristics, such as personhood, teleology, transcendence, and even ethics. Ultimately, theology is like ecology in that everything is interconnected; creation and anthropology are coextensive doctrines. If faith is renewed in creation,⁵⁷

humans and non-humans are not conceived as developing in incommensurable worlds according to distinct principles. The environment does not consist of objectivity as an autonomous sphere; plants and animals, rivers and rocks, meteors and seasons, do not exist in the same ontological niche, defined by its lack of humanity” (*Western Illusion*, 88). This puts a whole new twist on “American Exceptionalism:” it is exceptional in the way it negatively constructs relationships.

⁵² In *The New World*, Malick presents two cultures with two different worldviews living side by side at Jamestown: the English and Native Americans. On one level the film is about the relationship between Pocahontas and John Smith, but like all of Malick’s films, it is about much more. Ultimately it is about alterity. It shows the way in which the settlers destroy the land by taking more than they should and territorializing boundaries while the Native Americans live far more harmoniously with each other and the land.

⁵³ *Tree of Life* is about two life-views: nature and grace. “Nature” in the film is not about natural things; rather it is represents what Pieper calls a “workaday world,” while grace represents an openness to being.

⁵⁴ *Tree of Life*, Fox Searchlight, 2011, written and directed by Terrence Malick.

⁵⁵ Wendell Berry, *Life Is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2001), 151. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning...: A Catholic Understanding of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 93.

⁵⁷ Linking faith and creation together is important, Lossky contends: “It is often forgotten that the creation of the world is not a truth of a philosophical order, but rather an article of faith. Ancient philosophy knows nothing of creation in the absolute sense of the word...” in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: SVS Press, 2002), 91.

without reducing it to nature, then we can aptly deny Western illusions and say with Witt, "I seen a better world."

IV. THEOLOGY'S GIFT TO ECOLOGY

"Christian reflection on creation has been a bit of a Cinderella in twentieth century theology,"⁵⁸ invited to the ball via the ecological crisis. While a *metanoia* to the modern constitution, it also invites renewed focus on creation. But creation has always been there: why is this considered a comeback? Because modern dualism obscured creation to the point where modern theologians seldom reflect on it save for inquiry concerning origins or Darwinism.⁵⁹

In effect, creation became nature, a world "over there" for which humans, in varying expressions, are responsible. But even this responsibility is laden with dualism, for those imagining human responsibility (paternalistically) do so by separating humans from other beings.⁶⁰ Creation's Cinderella story, then, is not without problems. Indeed, many theologians accept the modern field of engagement. Those that do (i.e., intelligent design theorists) provide an *apologia* for creation via modern categories. Others reconstruct creation by doubting that its classical expression has anything to offer contemporary concerns. These theorists offer "postmodern," deconstructive engagements.⁶¹ But with Latour, "we have never been modern."⁶² So how can one construct theories founded *on* or *after* a time in which one has never properly been?

Therefore, these methods are inconsistent with reality; thus we do not have to start with the modern constitution at all. By renewing faith in creation in the time of ecology, we will discover that it is more relevant than previously imagined.

⁵⁸ Rowan Williams, "On Being Creatures," in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 63.

⁵⁹ See Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get it Wrong* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). For an ancient treatment of creation in light of science see Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis I*, 21, 41, in *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill and Matthew O'Connell (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ The Evangelical Environmental Network uses languages such as "creation care"; see <<http://creationcare.org/>>. It promotes human responsibility for "God's creation," but "creation" here is a sphere separate from human life.

⁶¹ See the work of Matthew Fox, Sallie McFague, and Rosemary Radford Reuther. These thinkers attempt to address ecological problems by theological reconstruction, and in some cases "de-mythologizing" its classical claims.

⁶² Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Latour argues that the modern constitution is defined by purifying, thus dualizing, nature from culture. As long as one purifies the world in this way, he is wholly modern. The problem, however, is that purification only took place in thought, not in practice. Modern activity produces "hybrid objects." One example is climate change. Humans (culture) became geological agents and changed something supposedly belonging to a completely separate sphere (climate-nature). For Latour we have never actually been modern; so being antimodern means accepting a playing field that does not exist, and postmodern means coming after what has never existed. Latour opts for non-modernism instead.

V. TRANSCENDENCE

Creation affirms transcendence; its name implies divine donation. Creation is not being itself, nor is it founded upon itself. Rather, it participates in a given being.⁶³ It is common to the Christian teaching of the doctrine of creation to affirm that all things were made by God *ex nihilo*,⁶⁴ the Creator created without preexistent materials, autonomous ideas, etc. while crafting the world. Transcendence, then, implies at least two things: there is a creator, and he has providence over his handiwork. “God is the creator,” Bulgakov affirms. “He created it ‘out of nothing.’”⁶⁵ Matter, then, is not opposed to grace. According to Scripture, God delighted in creation, calling it good, and even very good, in light of its diversity.⁶⁶ Bulgakov continues, developing a “religious materialism,”⁶⁷ affirming matter in its source and foundation.

Creation is the implanting of the divine, sophianic principles of the world into nothingness, out of which the being of the world arises. This act of God’s omnipotence, wisdom, and love—an act unfathomable for the creature and miraculous in the most authentic sense—establishes the domain of the extra-divine existence of these principles; and the world, creation, thereby acquires its independence, an existence separate from God.⁶⁸

A Biblical analogue is creation by and through the *Logos*.⁶⁹ All things—matter, the body, nonhuman life, etc.—are marked by the wisdom of God. For Bulgakov, creaturely Sophia is identical to divine Sophia, the substance emerging from triune circumincession, except for its mode of existence. He writes, “the world is the creaturely mirror, the image of the Absolute, the becoming Absolute....”⁷⁰ Resulting “from the overflow of the Divine life,” all matter is sacred. Sourced in and returning to the divine, the world is endowed with worth.⁷¹

⁶³ A fatal flaw when thinking of transcendence or of the Creator as “divine artist” is assuming that the Creator is far removed from his creation. Real transcendence means that God can also be more immanent in creation than creation is to itself. Transcendence really means that God is of another order of being, not restricted by categories of created being. It does “have” being, but only participates in the being it has been given.

⁶⁴ Williams argues that *ex nihilo* was a unique understanding of Judeo-Christian thought.

⁶⁵ Sergius Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles: Two Theological Essays*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 46.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 363.

⁶⁷ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 9.

⁶⁸ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 46.

⁶⁹ See the prologue to John’s Gospel and Colossians 1. It is important to note that *logocentricism* is not the same as *sophianicity*. The former thinks of the world by and through the second person of the Trinity. The latter goes further, suggesting that the world has ontic value because its divinity hails from the divinity of the Triune life. The example I give is here simply to help provide Biblical evidence that the world’s being is intimately linked to the Divine.

⁷⁰ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 46.

⁷¹ The doctrine of creation means that *Natura Pura* is a fallacy.

So the world is no mere mechanism. Bulgakov says that mechanisms exist in their finished state, but creatureliness is marked by becoming. He writes, "the world, which at creation, received total fullness and total perfection in its ontic foundation, is not at all finished in its state; it is only destined to become the true cosmos, the creaturely Sophia, in virtue of its primordial sophianicity."⁷² Thus providence emerges, for the Creator made the world for a particular end, an end to which God moves the world. If understood, this *telos* will help orient us toward a healthy ecological view of all—whether an animal is consumed or protected, it reveals glory in its being and is to be treated to the end of that glory. Proper consumption or use, for Christians, never implies mastery or possession; no matter how advanced a society, it cannot account for life.

VI. TELOS

All creation's members have the same source and *telos*. Consider Maximus' distinction between Creator and creatures:

Nothing that comes into being is its own end, since it is not self-caused. For if it were, it would be unbegotten, without beginning and unmoved, since it has nothing toward which it can be moved in any way. For what is self-caused transcends what has come into being, because it exists for the sake of nothing.⁷³

Not a mechanism, creation is a "living organism which consists of a hierarchy of entities united among one another, with man at their head as the bearer of free spiritual being...freedom is included in the very foundation of the world."⁷⁴ What is this goal existing at the cosmic foundation? *Theosis*; creation is structured for communion with the Divine. Additionally, human creatures have a role to play in this cosmic drama. Through human freedom—an indelible mark of the *imago Dei* and thus humanity's main distinction from other creatures (existing, in part, for other creatures)—humans are to orientate the world toward the divine artist by means of human creativity. Under creation, the worth of the world is restored without negating human activity. Nature and culture do not disappear in one another; rather, they are connected in the deepest sense, while paradoxically preserving difference.

VII. ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropologies risk dualism when the body and soul are radically separated from one another or, as in the case of Luther, when the soul's salvation is prioritized over the body's.⁷⁵ What is man? Bulgakov retorts:

⁷² Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 47.

⁷³ Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, eds. Robert M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 48.

⁷⁴ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 47.

⁷⁵ See Martin Luther's admonishment of Erasmus, *On The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson (Grand Rapids: James and Clark, 1973), 253. For an

“man by himself is by no means a spiritual (i.e., only a spiritual) being; he also has a body and is therefore a spiritual-body being. Man is not an angel; rather, he is man, a cosmic being, a cosmos, an anthropocosmos; and nothing cosmic is alien to him or... can or should be alienated from him.”⁷⁶ As ecology teaches, humans are constructed out of nature. But humans are also an inseparable unity of the spiritual and physical. Humans are thus uniquely rational and free. As such, humanity is linked with nature while being the “crown of creation,” responsible for orientating unfree creatures toward God.⁷⁷

Instead humanity bequeathed creation a dark side. Through misplaced free human action, creation was wounded to its core. Adam and Eve made themselves, rather than the Creator, the goal of creation; theologians call this orientation “the Fall.” Perversely, humans desired autonomy, which is, incidentally, the goal of modernity. It is no wonder then that the modern constitution has wrought such unintended catastrophes on the face of the earth. Further, this is not the only way humans deny their vocation. Humans also, as is the case with much contemporary spirituality, can turn completely away from the world in pursuit of otherworldliness.⁷⁸ This is groundless because God “does not take him out of the world, but only fills him with His power.”⁷⁹ True spirituality is not otherworldly, because its practice, ordained by the Creator, is intimately bound to the rest of creation. One might conclude that gardening gets one closer to God than a puritanical disavowal of pleasure.

Ultimately, human failure to connect life with the life-giver results in corruption.⁸⁰ Consequently, “that which took place in man and with man took place also with the whole world. Death, i.e., the insufficient power of life, permeated the whole world and man, instead of being the bearer of life, became the bearer of death.”⁸¹ But God’s providential goal

explanation on how the Reformation helped to secure modern secular/instrumentalist views of nature, see Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53; and Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Nature, Technology and the Sacred* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 42.

⁷⁶ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 8.

⁷⁷ This is not dualism *redivivus*. Creation overcomes dualism but not by forms of monism; it does affirm difference. The difference between humans and nonhumans is not a sharp distinction. Creaturely being is different by degree, but always connected in its source, content, and orientation. Humans differ specifically because of their spiritual qualities and thus responsibility. They are similar in that they are made from other beings, share in dependence, and, like all other beings, result from the work of a creator.

⁷⁸ For a Christian variant of otherworldly spirituality and its negative ecological consequences, see Michael S. Northcott, “The Dominion Lie: How Millennial Theology Erodes Creation Care,” in *Diversity and Dominion: Dialogues in Ecology, Ethics, and Theology*, eds. Kyle S. Van Houtan and Michael S. Northcott (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2010), 89-108.

⁷⁹ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 8.

⁸⁰ This, then, is the invention of evil. Bulgakov argues, “evil does *not exist* alongside good as an independent principle, a principle that competes with and is parallel to the good,” in *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 147. For Bulgakov, evil is nothing more than a parasite on the good; interesting language, indeed, for an ecological age.

⁸¹ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 24.

for the world is not over. Here, we witness the fullest meaning and end for creation: the Incarnation.⁸²

VIII. INCARNATION

"A new creation of man became necessary, with the condition, however, that the old creation be preserved. And this was accomplished by the divine Incarnation of Christ the Savior, of the Savior from sin and from death and, thus, the Savior of the Body."⁸³ And since he is the savior of the body, Christ is also the savior of creation. Certainly, "redemption cannot happen without or against creation. Indeed, the question arises as to whether perhaps creation is the only redemption."⁸⁴

Plainly, humans failed to be human; so the *Logos* incarnated to reveal true humanness. Humans, too, ignored their creatureliness; so the Incarnation also represents true creatureliness. *Theandrisms* is more than an ethical prescription; it is the metaphysical truth of life. One might reply, "Clearly, Christ demonstrates true humanity, but how does he reveal the meaning of creation?" The answer is that the *Logos* took on humanity and therefore creatureliness, since humans are creatures. Schmemmann argues of Christ, "he was the perfect expression of life as God intended it.... He was the heart of the world and the world killed Him."⁸⁵ More to the point, consider Maximus' defense of Chalcedonian Christology. Christ is one person with two unified natures, divine and human. Put another way, Christ is the divine-human, thus the divine-creature. Christ, therefore, is the centerpiece for understanding *theosis*—creation's true meaning. The goal of creation is witnessed in Christ's unified personhood. Modern dualism, with its hubristic addiction to technology, parodies this unification. It attempts to make the human divine, a false simulacrum of the Divine-Human.⁸⁶ Maximus writes that God took on creatureliness

⁸² A proper view of the world cannot be anthropocentric, cosmic-centric, or eco-centric. And even a vague theocentricism, like that of Gustafson, fails because of its ambiguous promotion of *Theos*; see *A Sense of the Divine: The Natural Environment from a Theocentric Perspective* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996). What is needed is a Christocentric, or as Bulgakov would say, a sophianic image of the world.

⁸³ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 25.

⁸⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, "The Consequences of Faith in Creation," in *In the Beginning...: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, 81-82. This is also why Burrell and Malits call creation and redemption twin, inseparable theological ideas, in David Burrell and Elena Malits, *Original Peace: Restoring God's Creation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 56.

⁸⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 23. Important for this section is to note that Bulgakov was a Maximian theologian, and Schmemmann was a pupil of Bulgakov. There is much continuity of thought, yet there is a subtle divergence. Bulgakov utilized Sophiology. Schmemmann, apparently not so comfortable with Sophiology, utilized a similar though less precise theme: "life of the world."

⁸⁶ See Bulgakov's "Heroism and the Spiritual Struggle," 81-82, in *Sergii Bulgakov: Towards a Russian Political Theology*, ed. and trans. Rowan Williams (New York: T&T Clark, 1999).

for our sake and thus renewed our nature, or better yet he created our nature anew, and returned it to its primordial dignity of incorruptibility through his holy flesh, born of our own flesh and animated by a rational soul. What is more, he generously provided our nature with the gift of deification, which he could not possibly have failed to bestow since he was himself God incarnate, indwelling the flesh in the same manner that the soul indwells the body, that is, thoroughly interpenetrating it in union without confusion.⁸⁷

“One Logos is many logoi.”⁸⁸ Crafted by and through the *Logos*, creation is pregnant with God’s “reason.”⁸⁹ Creation, too, is replete with diversity. So the one reason of God also supplies the reason of individual things. Diversity is unified by source and purpose—deification. Creation, then, offers Christological meaning for biodiversity.

Christ assumed creaturely nature to the point of death, He “became obedient to death, even cross-death.”⁹⁰ Not annihilated by the grave, Christ overcame death. Incarnationally, God assumed creation, including human life, and reorientated it back to himself. Those who follow the “New Adam,” through the “deathwaters” of baptism, receive human (creaturely) meaning back in full.

IX. THE CHURCH: COMMUNITY OF CREATION

Notably, Bulgakov’s ecclesiology is connected with creation.⁹¹ The church is the community that enacts the story: restoration of creation. It is the gathering of those anticipating total renewal while enacting renewal in the process. It is a social body including the rest of creation in its regular practice, contra Hobbes’s “war of all against all.”⁹²

⁸⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 83.

⁸⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 54. To this Elizabeth Theokritoff writes, “there are obvious similarities with Plato’s theory of ‘ideas’ underlying all that exists, but there are also crucial differences. In Christian thought, the *logoi*, or exemplars, or conceptions—whatever term we use—never form an autonomous realm *between* God and actual creatures,” in *Living in God’s Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology* (Yonkers, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009), 54. The many *logoi* in the *logos* formula demonstrate how creation participates in God while God is also immanent within creation.

⁸⁹ Reason here should not be understood in a modernist, Enlightenment sense. Reason allows humans, who can reason, to see the use of the world, but it also means that creation reveals something of God. With medieval thought, then, creation or “nature” is a book that reveals God just like Scripture does. These two books are to be read together to more fully understand God. Human rationality does not, with Theokritoff, separate humans from God and the world; rather it demonstrates how humans are to connect with God and other beings, *Living in God’s Creation*, 56.

⁹⁰ Philippians 2:8, my translation.

⁹¹ See Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*. Bulgakov, like other Russian Orthodox thinkers, thinks about creation and church together, in the same way as does the epistle to the Colossians. Interestingly, Colossians begins with Christ standing at the foundation of creation and then at the foundation of the church.

⁹² Alexander Schmemmann writes of the church’s practice, “it is to declare it to be the goal, the end of all our desires and interests, of our whole life, the supreme and ultimate value of all that exists. To bless is to accept in love, and to move toward what is loved and

The Eucharist is the prime example of a Christian social/material ethic. Bulgakov writes, "the church is given in priesthood this mysterious power to transubstantiate by the power of the Holy Spirit," adding, "this, strictly speaking, is what sanctification is."⁹³ The Eucharist represents the ontological scandal of redeemed matter. Bread and wine nourish both the body and the soul. It is the present reality of a future "transfigured earth," by a "descending power, descending into the world from the extramundane, supramundane, divine sphere."⁹⁴ Like the Incarnation, it is a commingling of creaturely and divine life.

The Eucharist is full of social consequences. First, matter's purpose is made manifest. Secondly, matter is no longer matter as such, nor is it wounded by human failing. Matter is essentially religious. Lastly, the Eucharist obliterates divisions between people. As a "focal practice,"⁹⁵ participants gather around one table with one loaf and cup, sharing equally without individualist prestige. When consuming (never possessing)⁹⁶ the Eucharist, Christians are also consumed into Christ's body. This social vision excludes competition for scarce resources. Rather, it is *kenosis*: self-offering and self-identification with one another.⁹⁷ This is why Bulgakov offers an anthropology of priesthood,⁹⁸ humans are the priests

accepted. The Church thus is the assembly, the gathering of those to whom the ultimate destination of all life has been revealed and who have accepted it. This acceptance is expressed in the solemn answer to doxology: Amen. It is indeed one of the most important words in the world, for it expresses the agreement of the Church to follow Christ in His ascension to His father, to make this ascension the destiny of man. It is Christ's gift to us, for only in Him can we say Amen to God, or rather He himself is our Amen to God and the Church is an Amen to Christ. Upon this Amen the fate of the human race is decided. It reveals that the movement toward God has begun." *For the Life of the World* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963), 29.

⁹³ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 17.

⁹⁴ Bulgakov, *Relics and Miracles*, 17.

⁹⁵ Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), 22, 124.

⁹⁶ Benjamin Meyers, noting Rowan Williams's reflection upon St. Augustine's view of *frui* and *uti* writes, "Our greatest temptation is to try and possess things, to treat the world as something that could be enjoyed as an end in itself. But this means we are really viewing the world as existing for *our* sake: as though the world were defined by its capacity to satisfy our own desires. We might imagine that we are valuing the world more highly when we treat it as an end itself but...the reverse is really the case. If our desire terminates in any finite object, then we have consumed that object, allowing its meaning to be exhausted by our desire. Paradoxically, only the 'use' of worldly things enables them to remain separate from us, inexhaustibly themselves, expanding our love as they deflect it towards an infinite object of love. Only a love directed towards God can rescue the world from the egotistical possessiveness of human desire." Benjamin Meyers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 84. This view coincides with hunting in hunter-gatherer societies. Contrary to certain ecological theories (i.e. Deep Ecology), things can be used. Only when seen properly do people cease being parasites, and usage enables flourishing.

⁹⁷ See William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁹⁸ For other anthropological metaphors of priesthood in contemporary theology, see the work of John Zizioulas, Rowan Williams, and Alexander Schmemmann.

of creation who, through freedom, offer creation back to God. When this anthropology is enacted, human action is driven by what makes things flourish in their individual modes of being.⁹⁹

X. CONCLUSION

Grace doesn't try to please itself. Accepts being slighted, forgotten, disliked. Accepts insults and injuries. Nature only wants to please itself. Get others to please it too. Likes to lord it over them. To have its own way. It finds reasons to be unhappy when all the world is shining around it. And love is smiling through all things.

-Mrs. O'Brien, *Tree of Life*

Modernity parodies the Fall. With the Fall, humanity asserted itself as the *telos* of life. In so doing, humanity turned from God and the world. The aftermath is a downward spiral to corruption. Creation was brought toward the root of its own being (without relation to the Creator)—nothingness. Modernity, likewise, is a movement away from God and from contingency within the world. Human ingenuity subsequently devolved into despotic demise. Both postlapsarian and modern anthropology reveal that humans forgot how to be creatures, forgetting our meaning *for* other beings as well as forgetting limit. So human denial of creatureliness means, among other things, the denial of creation's kinship.

By mining the tradition of creation, humanly vocation is rediscovered. As priestly creatures humans will again relate properly to the world. The final score shows that humans and nonhumans are divine crafts—sans nature-culture division. Creation is really the hinterland of dualism; the community of creation is all there is, marked by the grace of divine donation. All creation must be received and given as good gifts; all are beautifully meant for ecstatic union with God. This recovered vision will ignite a primordial sense: glory shining in all things. Perhaps, we should conclude with a meditation from Malick's film: "Oh, my soul. Let me be in you now. Look out through my eyes. Look out at the things you made. All things shining."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The church ought to be, then, the true vision of a sustainable community.

¹⁰⁰ *The Thin Red Line*.

SACRAMENTAL ONTOLOGY AND CALVIN: TOWARD A RE-ENCHANTED WORLD

JEREMY R. MANN¹

The doctrine of creation is experiencing a renaissance. Christoph Schwöbel writes, “The topic of creation, which for almost two hundred years, had played a subordinate or, at least contentious and highly problematical role in systematic theology, has received a prominent place as a major focus of theological attention—in church, universities and at theological conferences.”² In recent years the academy has attempted in many ways to descend its ivory tower; theologians in particular are interested in earthly life and the lived practices of Christian discipleship. On the opposite end of the spectrum, popular cultural trends now celebrate regional cuisine, artisanal hand goods and craft, and all manner of “do-it-yourself” groundedness. While it is admittedly difficult to make generalizations, renewed interest in creation is less common in the middle of these two poles of life, the church, perhaps given the somewhat nebulous place the doctrine of creation has between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21. The area where the doctrine has established renewed prominence—in a more earthly conception of the afterlife—fits fairly naturally into the larger narrative of God’s salvation plan for his people.

As Schwöbel implies, the doctrine has an uneven history. At the turn of the twentieth century, Max Weber popularized the phrase “a disenchanted world” to describe the effect of modernity’s obsession with utility and reductionism. No longer was the cosmos an expansive, mysterious entity, evocative of a deeper eternal reality. Now it was largely mapped, domesticated, and appraised; the remaining question concerned the most efficient process for harvesting resources. As Weber saw it, this disenchantment was largely the work of Protestants, an assessment many theologians have been happy to support: the Reformers’ bad seeds produced the rotten fruit of reductionism, well-fertilized by the manure of late-medieval nominalism.³ John Milbank describes the problem this way: “For several centuries now, secularism has been defining and

¹ Jeremy Mann is the Director of Programming and Development, Center for Pastor Theologians, Oak Park, Illinois

² Christoph Schwöbel, “God, Creation and the Christian Community: The Dogmatic Basis of a Christian Ethic of Createdness,” in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*, ed. Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 151.

³ Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2012).

constructing the world. . . . In its cyberspaces and theme-parks it promotes a materialism which is soulless, aggressive, nonchalant and nihilistic.”⁴

The underlying concern of enchantment is fairly straightforward: what exactly makes creation good? What is its significance, both with respect to *weightiness* and *reference*? Various aspects of the doctrine of creation bear on this question.⁵ One is the matter of general revelation and natural theology: the manner in which the created world gives evidence of God’s nature and the extent to which either fallen or regenerate humans can discern such signs. Another concerns the proper theological response to the scientific revolution catalyzed by Darwin.⁶ Still another involves human dominion: the recent acceleration of technological innovation and environmental impact raises questions about human progress and eschatological fulfillment. Finally and most fundamentally, the character of God’s being and the nature of creation must be explained: is creation, or perhaps “nature,” better understood as a kind of independent entity, originally brought about by God but now subsisting altogether separately, or, at the opposite extreme, is it an emanation from God, intrinsic to or even constitutive of the divine nature? If an intermediary position is adopted between these two poles, how do we understand the Creator-creature relationship, and what bearing does that have on creation’s significance and worth?

This essay will suggest that the priorities animating early Protestants can actually re-enchant the world in the late-modern era. Ultimately, those first called *evangelischen* possess the resources for an account of creation that is unrivaled in its spiritual vitality, coherence, and beauty. The essay itself will not defend in detail each element of the larger argument, but will attempt to trace the path of a more exhaustive treatment.⁷

The essay has five parts. The first is a short explication of John Calvin’s doctrine of creation, with particular attention to Calvin’s distinct genius: his emphasis on creation’s moment-by-moment dependence on the sustaining power and direction of God. Calvin’s account of creation is an influential representative of the Protestant approach. The second part of the paper will defend his account from criticisms advanced by advocates of sacramental ontology, an important stream of theology on creation that has recently gained renewed attention. I will argue that while in some critical ways Calvin departs from sacramentalism, his account preserves many of the goods that sacramentalists value. In section three we will step back to take stock of the larger contemporary discussion, briefly

⁴ John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, “Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

⁵ “Creation” and “nature” both have nuances and historical freight; in this paper I follow Doug Moo’s observation that “nature” is more often used to describe all that has been created apart from humanity and other persons, like angels. Douglas J. Moo, “Nature in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49 (2006): 449-88.

⁶ After Darwin, there is reason to believe biological progress is the result of violence, death, and extinction—on the face of it quite a different story than the crescendo of “good” to “very good” in Genesis 1.

⁷ A thorough treatment is the aim of my proposed dissertation at Wheaton College.

tracing streams of the Protestant thinking on creation and offering two challenges for sacramental ontologies. This will set up a proposal for re-enchantment. The fourth section will more deeply consider one element of that proposal: Adrian Pabst as a possible intermediary between Calvin and sacramental ontology. Pabst will also help illustrate how critical the manner in which the tradition is read is to shaping contemporary debate (particularly the appropriation of Aristotle and Plato in Christian history). Finally, the fifth section will consider pastoral implications of this larger question, arguing that although evangelicals have occasionally neglected creation, renewed focus is both possible and promising. It is also not without danger. My hope is that churches embrace God's good world without forgetting the proper boundaries of the doctrine of creation. While the task of re-enchanting the world is necessary and beneficial, caution must be exercised to maintain the distinctiveness of God's presence with his people, particularly its ontological culmination for which there is no analogy: God made man. Failure to articulate the manner in which all creation does *not* participate in the life of Christ risks obscuring the New Testament's picture of true liberation brought only by the crucified Savior, for the church, by the power of the Spirit.

I. CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF CREATION

While some aspects of Calvin's account were both innovative and intentional correctives to contemporary alternatives, the Reformer was at pains to affirm all the key elements of the doctrine as passed through the great tradition of orthodox Christian theology: creation *ex nihilo*, the fundamental goodness of all that God made, the benefits of prudent cultivation of the earth's resources and study of its patterns, and the revelation of God's character vaguely discernible therein.⁸ In large measure, Calvin's treatment focuses on answering specific opponents: the Manichaeans, the Stoics, the Libertines, the Epicureans, and the Aristotelians.

The first aspect of an orthodox account, creation *ex nihilo*, had been denied by Lucretius and other Epicureans.⁹ Calvin, speaking in support of this teaching, references more thorough defenses from Basil and Ambrose, but himself explicitly affirms, "God by the power of his Word and Spirit

⁸ This paper will not explore Calvin's writing on natural law, an aspect of his thought that has too often been neglected in Protestant accounts of Christian ethics. As John McNeill writes, "There is no real discontinuity between the teaching of the Reformers and that of their predecessors with respect to natural law." "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," *Journal of Religion*, 26, No. 3 (July 1946). A more recent treatment is Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006). See also David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009) and *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014).

⁹ Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, i, 155, LCL edition, p. 12, as quoted in *Institutes*, ed. McNeil, v. 1, 179.

created heaven and earth out of nothing....”¹⁰ Calvin also confirms, contra the Libertines, that devils and angels are not mere anthropomorphisms of human desire, but actual entities, capable of both obedience and disobedience, and like humanity, destined for final judgment.¹¹ Regarding the purpose of creation, a number of key aspects of Calvin’s account can be discerned. First, for the nonbeliever, creation serves as a pointer to the almighty divine author:

...he has engraved unmistakable marks of his glory, so clear and so prominent that even unlettered and stupid folk cannot plead the excuse of ignorance...ever since the creation of the universe he brought forth those insignia whereby he shows his glory to us, whenever and wherever we cast our gaze.¹²

While these insignia are prominent and unmistakable, they do not result in fitting worship. Like his Catholic predecessors, Calvin did not believe one could come to saving faith without the Bible or the unique self-disclosure of God through Jesus, supported by the Law and Prophets.¹³ “It is therefore in vain that so many burning lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author.”¹⁴ Creation did, however, render humanity inexcusable, based on ubiquitous violation of the moral code imprinted on every heart and rejection of the divine Lawgiver.¹⁵

The glory of God as revealed in nature was not only an apologetic, however. Calvin also argued that for the believer, contemplation of God’s extravagant and beautiful grace in creation leads Christians to thankfulness and greater trust of him. This thankfulness is an avenue toward deeper praise of God, but also an aspect of true human enjoyment of God’s good gifts on earth: “let us not be ashamed to take pious delight in the works of God open and manifest in this most beautiful theater.”¹⁶ In one passage this grace sounds like a kind of cosmic hospitality, centered on the image of a house, exquisitely and beautifully adorned, spacious and full of varied goods.¹⁷ In Calvin’s commentary on Psalm 109 God is described as giving bountifully, “to commend to us the goodness of God in his tenderly and abundantly nourishing men as a kind-hearted father does his children.”¹⁸ Calvin was especially fond of marveling at the beauty and intricate motion of the starry night sky, both for the awe such contemplation inspired (thinkers in the medieval and early modern

¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 14. 20.

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 14. 20.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.1

¹³ As Thomas Aquinas writes, “For truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors.” *Summa Theologia*, Ia, Q. 1, A. 1.

¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 6. 14.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 6. 14.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 16. 20.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 16. 20.

¹⁸ John Calvin, Commentary on Ps. 104, CO 32:97.

era were fascinated by astronomy, and even many Christians entertained speculations about astrology¹⁹), but also because of how the heavens reminded mortals of their fragile place in the world, one of Calvin's favorite themes when reflecting on the post-fall creation: "Go through the city streets, you are subject to as many dangers as there are tiles on the roofs.... All the fierce animals you see are armed for your destruction."²⁰ The disorder of creation, precipitated by Adam and Eve's rebellion and negligence of their duty to exercise dominion over the earth, necessitated increased involvement from God to prevent total chaos. Calvin believed that Satan attempted to use the Fall to "obscure the glory of God." Part of this is seen in the violent and aggressive nature of wild animals, who before the Fall were subordinate to humanity. Just as God upholds the heavens and restrains the waters with a bridle, he also restricts wild animals from attacking human settlements.²¹

The most distinctive aspect of Calvin's doctrine of creation is his regular insistence that God is not a "momentary Creator," but sustains all that is visible moment-by-moment by his loving care. In fact, Calvin conceived of this difference—creation as singular act versus creation as ongoing preservation—as mapping the most important distinction between Christian faith's view of creation and the "carnal sense" of the unregenerate.²² According to Susan Schreiner, Calvin's interest in this point is largely due to the fact that Aristotelean cosmology, the regnant system of late medieval and early modern thought (having replaced what Wynand de Beer calls "the Christian Platonist synthesis") established a notion of God that privileged the initial act of movement but denied any additional intervention. For many of Calvin's medieval predecessors, God's power as governor of the cosmos (or in Aristotle's particular parlance, the Unmoved Mover) concerned only his unique, direct contact with the outermost sphere of creation, the firmament sphere. For Calvin, this account situated God too distant from creation, particularly in light of the early modern revival of Epicureanism, an even more radical account that further naturalized the cosmos.²³ In response Calvin placed special emphasis on God's continual, active maintenance of the universe.²⁴

¹⁹ Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1995), 31.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 17. 10.

²¹ Susan Schreiner, "Creation and Providence," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 269.

²² Calvin, *Institutes*, I. 16. 1. It is worth mentioning that according to Richard Muller, Calvin further distinguishes between *Biblical* knowledge of God as Creator (which is unavailable to anyone lacking the spectacles of Scripture) and full knowledge of God in Christ as Redeemer (cf. Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 290-92).

²³ Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory*, 33.

²⁴ It must be noted that previous Christian thinkers taught the same idea. Irenaeus and Athanasius believed as much. Thomas Aquinas describes this subsistence using participation language: "...every creature stands in relation to God as the air to the light of the sun. For as the sun is light by giving its own nature, while the air comes to be lighted by sharing in the sun's nature, so too God alone is being by his essence which is his *esse*, while

Calvin's interest in God's ever-present upholding of creation by his intimate, intentional, sovereign care is largely motivated by his conviction that nature should never be thought of as having its own, "ungraced" independence. This conviction also explains Calvin's ambivalence toward secondary causality.²⁵

II. SACRAMENTAL ONTOLOGY AND CALVIN

Let us now turn to an assessment of one criticism of Calvin's approach. This comes from Hans Boersma, a proponent of a sacramental ontology. Sacramental ontology finds its genesis in the work of French Catholics Henri de Lubac, his protégé Jean Daniélou, and Yves Congar, who sought to reintroduce an earthly vitality into what they considered a calcified neo-Thomism. Daniélou, the most public defender of what became known as *nouvelle théologie*, attempted to show that historically the strict division between nature and grace, or nature and the supernatural, was unfounded. Such a sharp distinction played into the very problem the neo-Thomists were seeking to address in response to modernism—the domain of the secular eventually crowding out any sense of divine presence in ordinary life. Their interest in re-enchanting the world has spread beyond Catholic ecclesial boundaries. Radical Orthodoxy can be seen as a more recent, largely Anglo-Catholic iteration of this response.²⁶ Its drama has a handful of new supporting characters, but largely the same villains: the modern notion of the secular and a univocal view of language.²⁷ Other Protestants have joined sacramental ontology's cause. In particular, Boersma has similarly diagnosed the modern age's woes and the necessary remedy, defending a "participationist ontology." Boersma does not define exactly what participation is, resulting in criticism of his frequent use of the term.²⁸ We hear what attends participation, but nothing like necessary and sufficient conditions delineating participation from other types of relation. His use of the term clearly differs from the recent "spiritual" reclamation of the term.²⁹ In Boersma the created

every creature is being by participation, i.e., its essence is not its *esse*. This is why Augustine writes "were God's power at any moment to leave the being he created to be ruled by it, their species would at once cease to be, and their nature would collapse...."

²⁵ Susan Schreiner, "Creation and Providence," in *The Calvin Handbook*, 269.

²⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 91; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: a New Theology*, 2–3.

²⁷ Univocity is the notion that words describing God's existence and properties have an identical meaning when applied to created entities, in contrast to the *analogia entis*, which roots analogous meaning for divine and human properties in the being that creatures are given to share with their Creator.

²⁸ Daniel J. Treier advances this critique in "Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry: A Review Essay" (with a response from Hans Boersma), in *Christian Scholar's Review*, 41, No. 1 (Fall 2011): 67–71.

²⁹ See the span of interest from Biblical scholars, systematic theologians, and historical theologians (Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2012], 33–37; Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*, Changing

world is described as a woven tapestry of earthly and divine threads, each informing its character.³⁰ Boersma clearly considers participation essential—multiple times he maintains that alternative accounts that lack explicit reference to participation are not truly sacramental. He goes so far as to say that establishing creation's sacramental character trumps emphasizing many other Protestant theological commitments: “to give up on the notion of participation would be to submit to the vacuous nominalism of modernity, something I would not be prepared to do.”³¹ Boersma considers sacramental ontology a critical feature of the great inherited tradition of Christian faith (in varying levels of latency from the Patristics to roughly the fourteenth century.). Second, Boersma argues there is no better way of conceiving of the purpose and importance of creation: “The entire cosmos is meant to serve as a sacrament: a material gift from God in and through which we enter into the joy of his heavenly presence.”³² Boersma cites Colossians 1:17 (“He [Christ] is before all things, and in him all things hold together”) and Isaiah 6:3 (“the whole earth is full of his glory”) as passages that support a sacramental ontology.

Like his Radical Orthodoxy allies, Boersma saves his sharpest attacks for Ockham and Scotus, but he also sustains a lengthy critique of Calvin.³³ He has two main criticisms. The first is that while Calvin appreciated the fundamental unity underlying both grace and nature, “Calvin's theology was unable to avoid the desacramentalizing of nature....”³⁴ The second critique concerns what Boersma believes is a fundamental incompatibility between Calvin's anthropology and soteriology and an account of creation that maintains its revelatory power for fallen humans:

The Fall, according to Calvin, had rendered the human will radically incompetent. The resulting opposition between human inability and

Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007]; Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 67–74).

³⁰ Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 9.

³¹ Hans Boersma, “Dan Treier's Sacramental Participation in Truth—A Response to His Review of *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry*,” *Christian Scholar's Review*, 41 (Winter 2011): 74.

³² Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 9.

³³ Univocity and nominalism are not the focus of this paper, but let the author register a point of disagreement with Boersma and, from a different source but not entirely unrelated, Radical Orthodoxy. For the best short defense of univocity and the larger concerns of the late Medieval Nominalists, see Richard Cross, “Univocity and Mystery,” in Roberto Hofmeister Pich, ed., *New Essays on Metaphysics as “Scientia Transcendens”: Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Medieval Philosophy, Held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande Do Sul (Pucrs), Porto Alegre/Brazil, 15–18 August 2006* and “Idolatry and Religious Language,” in *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 2008. Another scholar on the same point, from a more philosophical perspective, is Thomas Williams in “The Doctrine of Univocity Is True and Salutory,” in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, October 2005.

³⁴ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 92.

divine grace caused Calvin—despite his best humanist intentions—to pitch grace over against nature.³⁵

Insofar as Boersma's notion of sacramentalism requires participation, one can safely reason that Calvin would not have endorsed it, threatening as this approach is to the utter dissimilarity between God and his creation. Jeremy Begbie describes Calvin's general instincts well: "Calvin seems especially anxious about anything that might compromise God's utter otherness."³⁶ It is critical, however, to recognize the relationship of this point to Calvin's Christology, intent as he is on preserving space for the utterly unique ministry of Christ. It is not surprising that it is in comments on John's Gospel where Calvin describes God as "entirely other" in his transcendence of all matter, "as different from flesh as fire is from water."³⁷ Carlos Eire describes Calvin's approach to transcendence by pulling together two of Calvin's famous dicta:

Calvin forcefully asserted God's transcendence through the principle *finitum non est capax infiniti* and His omnipotence through *solī Deo Gloria*. To make others aware of this dual realization, Calvin systematically juxtaposed the divine and the human, contrasted the spiritual and the material, and placed the transcendent and omnipotent *solus* of God above the contingent multiple of man and the created world.³⁸

In view of Boersma's desire to weave a united and mingled whole between natural and supernatural, Calvin's approach can be read as a decisive *extraction* of God from the ordinary. Where Boersma references the goods on earth as forming a kind of Jacob's ladder to heaven, Calvin emphasizes that God is totally inaccessible through any means apart from his own self-disclosure.³⁹ Boersma, referencing Irenaeus, sees in Ephesians 1:10 a statement describing Christ's present work throughout all creation: "to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." In Calvin's commentary on this verse, he emphasizes the church's unity with God in Christ, not all creation's:

Formed into one body, we are united to God, and closely connected with each other. Without Christ, on the other hand, the whole

³⁵ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 92.

³⁶ Jeremy Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 108.

³⁷ Calvin, *Commentary on John's Gospel*, CO 47.90.

³⁸ Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 197.

³⁹ Critical for Calvin is the preservation of the uniquely revelatory nature of Jesus over against all other aspects of divine revelation. This keystone of Reformed theology is skillfully expressed while somewhat tempered in Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*. Similar themes, albeit less ontologically oriented, are explored in J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011).

world is a shapeless chaos and frightful confusion. We are brought into actual unity by Christ alone.⁴⁰

For Calvin there is no general connection with God; in this context he calls the world “shapeless chaos and frightful confusion.” Put another way: only through the unique and gracious work of Christ in redemption are sinners and a fallen world genuinely united with God. As Romans 8:20-21 states:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Absent this restoration, Calvin does not think it proper to speak of creation participating in the life of God. And prior to the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth, creation’s relation to God is still one of partial estrangement.

Another example of Calvin’s emphasis on distinction between God and creation can be seen in the previously treated topic of secondary causality. Kilian McDonnell describes it this way: “For Calvin, the flight from secondary causality is seen as a return to transcendence.”⁴¹ As has already been mentioned, however, Calvin was quite adamant about the intimacy of God’s role in upholding creation, a vivid picture of immanence, albeit of a somewhat different sort than what Boersma conceives. Instead of undergirding being, Calvin speaks of God as vigilant, busy, and constantly tending creation’s existence. Thus, while Calvin intentionally parts ways with a sacramental conception of the universe, he does so partially fulfilling Boersma’s second desiderata for preserving a sacramental ontology in the first place: to restore a rich sense of the importance and purpose of creation, as well as God’s “nearness” to it. Calvin does believe creation reveals aspects of the divine character, and for the believer, creation serves as a theater for obedience and praise to God for his marvelous power and beauty. He is also at pains to underscore God’s constant care and authority over everything that happens in creation. One might say that Calvin believes creation is just as purposeful and intentional as Boersma does; he just renders that importance in less ontological language.

Part of this reticence to engage pure metaphysics is a topic of major debate: to what extent was Calvin in agreement with the late medieval nominalists?⁴² David Steinmetz writes, “While Calvin is only

⁴⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library; <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41.iv.ii.ii.html>> [last accessed December 17, 2016].

⁴¹ Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 39.

⁴² There is a great deal of work on this question, notably Heiko A. Obermann, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962); Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

too eager to recommend the boundless power of God as a comfort for believers, he does not want the godly to contemplate that power except through the spectacles of Scripture.”⁴³ Calvin’s anti-speculative approach is simply not comfortable discussing pure being, whether by incorporating participationist language or in joining the extended attacks against *analogia entis*. Another example of Calvin’s reticence to engage in metaphysical speculation can be shown in his attacks against the Aristotelian cosmology. While Calvin is clearly quite critical of Christian appropriations of Aristotle, he never invokes the great chain of being characteristic of Neoplatonic cosmologies and their Christian relatives. In these accounts the discernible hierarchy of objects in the world—a gradation of being with rocks and plants at the lowest level, animals above them, then humans above them, followed by spirits above them—points to the perfect divine source of all things. Further, the functions and *teloi* of each being is derived from its status and relation to other created beings. In many ways this mode of rendering is quite friendly to Calvinism.

III. TOWARD A RE-ENCHANTED CREATION

While Calvin offers resources for a robust doctrine of creation, he cannot be our only guide. Even if one thinks his approach nearly perfect, it does not directly address later challenges—the list of questions that introduced this essay only develop new force and complexity after the Enlightenment. Furthermore, it is easy to see how critics of Calvin consider him particularly lacking for this era, both in his fairly sparse treatment of this topic and in the larger Protestant legacies he shaped. Let us consider those briefly.

For our purposes, Protestant treatments of creation diverge into five streams. The first is in large measure intertwined with modernism itself: the liberal, often Lutheran Protestant legacy embroidered by the twin philosophical threads connecting Kant to Descartes—rationalism and empiricism.⁴⁴ This legacy cast doubt on the knowability of any truth about God, by definition beyond our ken. To compensate, theologians began working from the ground up. This, at its best, emphasized the creed’s first article, but often it lost sight of the divinely created and actively sustained character of the cosmos.⁴⁵

A second stream is neo-Calvinist, emerging from Dutch Reformed descendants of Calvin’s legacy. These theologians emphasized the difference between Creator and creature while promoting a robust account of common grace and the “creation mandate” for God’s people to

⁴³ David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 48.

⁴⁴ Both groups assumed a distinction between the appearances of things and the underlying reality of them, what Locke called “that which I know not what” (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [London: Fontana Library, 1964], 185–87).

⁴⁵ Katherine Sonderegger, “Creation,” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Kelly M. Kapic (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012) 111.

exercise dominion.⁴⁶ Kuyper and Dooyeweerd particularly influenced this stream, which preserves the nearness of the created world to God through its moment-by-moment dependence on his sustaining hand. What is occasionally lost in this account, marked as it often is by philosophical rigor, is the personal *telos* of creation: redeemed fellowship between God and humanity.

Related but distinct from this group is a second body of theologians devoted to Calvin, reflecting a third stream: the Westminster emphasis upon Biblical theology.⁴⁷ This emphasis prioritizes the Biblical language of covenant that synchronizes the progress of revelation with the progress of redemption. In contrast to the Neo-Calvinists, this Reformed strand is less optimistic about unbelieving society and Christian renewal of creation, prioritizing instead the authority of Scripture in the church and the attendant hope of eschatological consummation.⁴⁸ In either case, Reformed appeals to common grace and general revelation on the one hand and the Biblical narrative of covenant on the other have enabled broader Protestant traditions to acknowledge the goodness of creation, confronting “gnostic” or dualistic tendencies.⁴⁹

The fourth stream issues from Karl Barth, recognized innovator in the theological subtopics of Christology, election, and revelation. His work on the doctrine of creation, however, has also significantly shaped contemporary theological reflection. Per Lønning writes, “To a large extent current issues in the theology of creation reflect either advocacy or questioning of the Barthian inheritance.”⁵⁰ Many of the questions of Barth’s inheritance concern his priority of the theological-anthropological dimensions of creation over nonhuman nature.⁵¹ According to Paul Santmire, representative of this line of critique, Barth’s position is marked by “a radical anthropocentrism,”⁵² wherein nature “is not redeemed. It is merely used.”⁵³

⁴⁶ Richard Mouw, “Dutch Calvinist Philosophical Influences in North America,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 99.

⁴⁷ Aspects of these two Calvinist tendencies have gained wider evangelical influence through the spread of “Reformed worldview” thinking in Christian education (see David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002]).

⁴⁸ Michael Horton, “The Time Between: Redefining the ‘Secular’ in Contemporary Debate,” in *After Modernity? Secularity, Globalization, and the Re-enchantment of the World*, ed. James K.A. Smith (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 61-65.

⁴⁹ Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

⁵⁰ Per Lønning, *Creation—An Ecumenical Challenge?: Reflections Issuing from a Study by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1989), 13.

⁵¹ It is important to note that while Barth’s emphasis on anthropology is one aspect often questioned, it is hardly the only one. Other challengers address his rejection of natural theology, including how he works out the claim that “only by faith [do] we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God” (CD III/1, 4, and 7).

⁵² H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 149. Santmire is hardly alone in this judgment. Moltmann, Webster, Torrance, Young, Barbour, and Fulljames all make it as well.

⁵³ Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*, 171.

Fifthly, Anabaptist and more pietistic theologians in recent years have begun articulating more fully their own approaches to creation: recovering aspects of a Romantic heritage, critiquing “worldview” thinking, emphasizing creation’s fallen “principalities and powers,” and championing the prophetic pursuit of justice.⁵⁴

In my estimation, each stream has something to commend it. What remains, however, is a sufficiently holistic and emphatic ontology of how in God “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28)—in terms of either the cosmos signifying God’s presence or personal creatures participating in the divine fellowship through engaging creation as such. Interest in Boersma’s project in particular, along with appeals among Christian artists and educators to “sacramental” language in general, suggests a contemporary Protestant appetite for recovering creation’s mysterious connections to God—for its re-enchantment.⁵⁵ Evangelicals in particular have something to learn.

Ultimately, however, sacramental ontology can only take us so far. Its strong emphasis on a general account of creation threatens the uniqueness of the Incarnation and the gracious offer of salvation, obtained through faith alone. For the Reformers, the gospel account depended on a hard distinction between the holy Creator and fallen creatures in a sin-cursed cosmos, and an equally strong doctrine of union with Christ exclusive to the redeemed. Accounts of creation that emphasize its “participationist” dimension without strict attention to these divisions raise the threat of idolatry, which always attends blurring the distinction between Creator and creature. While it is hazardous to sharply divide the sacred from the secular, describing the created world as a woven tapestry is liable to obscure the ontological uniqueness of God. Despite their best efforts, participationist accounts of being ultimately crowd out space for Christ’s unique validation of creation in the Incarnation.⁵⁶ The Chalcedonian

⁵⁴ Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ This can be seen in a number of ways: theological projects that appreciatively adapt Catholic *Ressourcement* (John Webster, “Purity and Plenitude: Evangelical Reflections on Congar’s *Tradition and Traditions*,” *IJST*, 7 [2005]: 407); rearticulations of the divine character congruent with the created order (Randall Zachman, “God Manifested in God’s Works: The Knowledge of God in the Reformed Tradition,” in *The Death of Metaphysics; The Death of Culture: Epistemology, Metaphysics, and Morality*, ed. Mark J. Cherry [Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006], 71–97); sustained appreciation for theological meditation on nature (Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* [London: Picador, 1976]); and appetite for reflection on the manner in which art and culture natively depict eternal truths (Jeremy Bebgie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music*).

⁵⁶ John Milbank writes, “Radical Orthodoxy sees the historic root of the celebration of these things [earthly realities] in participatory philosophy and incarnational theology, even if it can acknowledge that premodern tradition never took this celebration far enough” (John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, “Suspending the Material: the Turn of Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, 4). In fact, Milbank does not just celebrate the earthly realm, he takes it as essential for any ascension to heaven: “...when we contingently but authentically make things and reshape ourselves through time, we are not estranged from the eternal, but enter further into its recesses by what for

definition is so profound because it joins in one person such distinct natures.

The second problem concerns the twofold mismatch between the conceptual framework of sacramental ontology and the language for creation in the Bible. First, sacramental ontologies generally fail to capture the created world's dynamic history in the arc of Scripture.⁵⁷ Creation is innocent and embryonic in Eden, cursed and contested after the Fall, and fulfilled and renewed at the eschaton; there is also development within the period following the Fall before the eschaton. Additionally, this mismatch translates into a liturgical problem: the language God gives his people for worship does not emphasize participation in the divine as the ground of all being. Instead of being the ground of being or a woven tapestry, Scripture portrays the cosmos chiefly as an arena for God's gracious activity.⁵⁸ The Creation Psalms (8, 19, 29, 65, 104, 139) praise God for building such an exquisite space, adorning it, maintaining it, and supplying all that is necessary for life in it. Other Biblical texts portray God reclaiming this lowly yet contested arena for dwelling with his people. Furthermore, Christ's teaching (and resurrection body) emphasizes that the eschaton ought *not* be understood as a simple restoration of creation's original features—again supporting a more redemptive-historical approach than sacramental ontology.⁵⁹

Acknowledging these problems, let us consider how a re-enchanting account of creation might take cues from sacramental ontology yet retain Protestant theology's "evangelical" commitment more clearly. A helpful guiding question can be put simply: how does emphasis upon the personally reconciling, glory-extending gospel of God support a robust ontology of creation?

Ultimately I believe the priorities of sacramental ontology can be preserved while avoiding the problems of speculative metaphysics, attending more closely to the Bible's language, preserving the unique significance of Christ's incarnation, resurrection, and ascension, and better accommodating the changing relationship between humankind and God's created world through each act of salvation history. Such an

us is the *only possible route*" (John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* [London: Routledge, 2003], ix).

⁵⁷ This has received increased attention in recent years. Terence Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005); Ted Peters, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation: Conflict, Conversation, and Convergence* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004).

⁵⁸ Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985). "Arena" is a slight modification from Calvin's "theater" metaphor (Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*).

⁵⁹ M. Daniel Carroll R., "The Power of the Future in the Present: Eschatology and Ethics in O'Donovan and Beyond," in *A Royal Priesthood? The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically: A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song, and Albert M. Wolters (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 116–43.

account would emphasize the personal character of Christian ontology, expressed by God's intention to make time and space for communion, forming humanity into Christ's likeness, that we might be at home in the cosmos with God. Four more contemporary dialogue partners can offer resources for this account. Colin Gunton's trinitarian emphasis underscores creation's distinct integrity and God's personal interaction with humanity.⁶⁰ Adrian Pabst's treatment of Christian Neoplatonism finds historical affinities with a more relational (rather than sacramental *per se*) ontology in the early Patristics. Herman Bavinck's account of nature avoids both occasionalism and an unhelpful dichotomy with grace, providing an earlier Protestant parallel with critiques of neo-Thomism from the *nouvelle théologie*.⁶¹ Finally, Oliver O'Donovan both highlights God's reaffirmation of the created order in Christ's resurrection and provides a political interpretation of the Biblical covenant history, thereby emphasizing personal freedom for relationship rather than abstract ontology alone.⁶² Such an account would be able to describe how creation testifies of God's nature, its beauty funds Christian worship, and its myriad opportunities invite holistic growth in God's image-bearers. Let us now more deeply consider one element of this alternative story, picking up where we left off with Calvin.

IV. PABST ON PROTESTANT READINGS OF THE TRADITION

As has been shown, one Protestant theological hallmark is the rendering of creation's relationship to God as one of strong distinction: creation's substance is neither constitutive of the divine nor a mingling of "natural" and "supernatural" elements. At the same time, Calvin, even more than Luther, seeks to preserve a number of features of creation emphasized by sacramentalists: its revelatory function, its inherent goodness and *telos*, and its significance as a theater of God's glorification and humanity's fitting response of worship and dominion-keeping. How then can these two aspects of Calvin be put together naturally? Is there a reason creation works the way it does in God's economy?

Adrian Pabst's *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* offers an interesting possibility for integrating Calvin's account into the larger Christian tradition that precedes him. Calvin himself was adamant about showing the Reformation to be a recovery of the true character of God's people, not an innovation or a replacement.⁶³ According to Pabst,

⁶⁰ Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 21–44; *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History, and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁶¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, *God and Creation*, trans. J. Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

⁶² Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994) and *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶³ One can see evidence of this in Calvin's frequent appeal to the important theologians in Christian history (Augustine most notably) and the gradual expansion of the *Institutes* from 1536 to 1559 with more and more patristic sources.

the Christian tradition at its best has always accounted for metaphysical individuation with a broadly Platonic appeal to relations. Contra Aristotle, what makes a particular thing the thing that it is and not some other thing is not its individual substance, but the relations it bears to the Good, or, in the Christian renderings, to God. To put it another way: no object can be essentially described apart from God. Not only is a thing's createdness an essential property, but we must also recognize the relation that created thing has to every other created thing; there is properly no such thing as an independent substance, apart from God. Pabst believes that the Christian God, essentially tri-personal, embeds relationality even deeper into the schematic architecture of the universe than Platonism did in the first place. He reads this Platonic emphasis on relationality through Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Boethius, and Dionysius (rejecting the view that Augustine and Boethius are proto-Cartesian), with a climax in Aquinas. In order to make this story work, Pabst needs to show how Aquinas and the other scholastics—so often understood as Aristotelians—are actually less interested in substance than in relations. The story he tells is fairly convincing:

Fundamentally my argument is that the individual, understood as a constitutive category in both philosophy and politics, is a modern invention that can only be understood as a shift within theology that eschewed the patristic and medieval vision of relationality in favour of abstract individuality.⁶⁴

But for sacramental ontology, the important question is this: does Pabst's approach provide a way forward for Calvin?

I believe it does, but with possible threats along the way. As has already been mentioned, Calvin's account of creation depends heavily on its continual dependence on God. Through the *Institutes* we see a Godward orientation of all knowledge and behavior. The opening chapter begins with a meditation on the impossibility of self-knowledge without knowledge of God. Furthermore, the priority on the covenant in Calvin and later Reformed thought is suggestive of the relational aspect of divine discourse, both through the Scriptures (special revelation) and through nature (general revelation). Therefore, while Pabst does not examine the magisterial Reformers in his historical survey, there are many aspects of the relational rendering of essence that fit the Protestant picture.

There are, however, two possible conflicts. The first relates to Calvin's hesitancy toward extra-Biblical speculation. As was already mentioned, nowhere does he reference the great chain of being so characteristic of Plato, despite his repeated criticisms of Aristotle. Julie Canlis's recent book *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* explores the manner of Christian maturation in Calvin—there are traces of a kind of gradation of being, but only in service to describe the mediatorial

⁶⁴ Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy (Interventions)* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 448.

ministry of Christ.⁶⁵ For Calvin, the only bridge between heaven and earth is the Son of God, and any attempt to fashion an alternative is evidence of humanity's tendency toward idolatry, new Towers of Babel.⁶⁶ Thus, while the account of Pabst might naturally fit with Calvin, it could be argued that it goes far beyond what the Reformer would ever teach with confidence.

The second possible problem concerns the actual metaphysics of the account, which are frankly lightly treated for a book entitled *Metaphysics*. We lack in this admittedly skillful historical work sustained attention to the actual relations described. In some ways this is expected, given Pabst's interests as a political theologian and theorist, but absent a clear statement about what these relations do not include, there is always the possibility of Boersma's mingling. Given Pabst's twin focus on pre-Reformation theologians and post-Reformation political thinkers, one might be skeptical that deeper digging will bring up anything much different than more Catholic accounts, particularly with how sparsely Pabst speaks of the radical fissure between heaven and earth brought about by sin. There is surely a possibility of appealing to representatives that more sharply contrast God and creation, but those voices are not here. This leaves Pabst serving as an interesting opportunity for evangelical theologians: he opens lines of inquiry that could be fruitful and integrative to the larger tradition, but a strong link remains unestablished.

V. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

What difference does a doctrine of creation make? And how do fine distinctions between "ontological participation" and "moment-by-moment dependence" serve the people of God? To answer this question, let us focus on two separate items. First, let us consider the manner in which a robust doctrine of creation, whether sacramental or not, contributes to hearty, God-honoring Christian faith. Second, let us turn to the importance of telling the story one way (traditional Protestant) rather than another (sacramental).

The doctrine of creation is not a keystone doctrine of Christian faith. It is an important element of the story, but it is not the climax. This difference has shaped evangelical history. When the great Anglican bishop J.C. Ryle acknowledged that the largely listless Church of England of his day did not believe outright heresy, he appealed to misplaced emphasis. When discussing the evangelical priority on authority of Scripture, the significance of Christ's atonement, and the importance of genuine conversion, he writes:

Propound them separately, as points to be believed, and [the Church of England] would admit them every one. But they do not give

⁶⁵ Canlis has a line germane to this discussion: "this is not a story of ascent to God by grace (Aquinas), or of the soul's ascent (Augustine), but of Christ's ascent." *Calvin's Ladder*, 43.

⁶⁶ Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*, 188.

them the prominence, position, rank, degree, priority, dignity, and precedence which we do. And this I hold to be a most important difference between us and them. We say boldly that they are the first, foremost, chief, and principal things in Christianity, and that want of attention to their position mars and spoils the teaching of many well-meaning Churchmen.⁶⁷

There is, however, a danger with such a strong hierarchy. Fred Sanders reflects on this in the introduction to *The Deep Things of God*:

When evangelicalism wanes into an anemic condition, as it sadly has in recent decades, it happens in this way: the points of emphasis are isolated from the main body of Christian truth and handled as if they are the whole story rather than the key points. Instead of teaching the full counsel of God (incarnation, ministry of healing and teaching, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming), anemic evangelicalism simply shouts its one point of emphasis louder and louder (the cross! the cross! the cross!)... The rest of the matrix matters: the death of Jesus is salvation partly because of the life he lived before it, and certainly because of the new life he lived after it, and above all because of the eternal background in which he is the eternal Son of the eternal Father.⁶⁸

The doctrine of creation is one aspect of the theological matrix that has often either been forgotten or only superficially parroted. Sadly, when it is considered, the goal is only to disarm apologetic threats. How tragic that we have largely lost sight of the manner in which creation testifies of God's nature, that its beauty funds Christian worship, and that its myriad opportunities invite holistic growth in God's image-bearers.

Consider, for example, Barth's reflection on Genesis, when he writes that in the account beginning in 2:4 the human "is first introduced only as the being who had to be created for the sake of the earth and to serve it."⁶⁹ Unlike in the first chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve are commissioned in the Yahwist account to serve the earth, a role with "very definite control of Yahweh-Elohim over man."⁷⁰ The definite control of God over them shapes and authorizes their service; they are not lords in their own right, but God's representatives on earth.

More specifically, Adam and Eve are created and commissioned "as the farmer and gardener fills the 'gap' between the barren earth and its goal of fruitfulness."⁷¹ The "gap" could be understood in a number of ways. First, verse 5 says that Eden itself has no vegetation when Adam is created, "for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land," and, more relevant

⁶⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied*, 3rd ed. (London: Heritage Bible Fellowship, 2011), 8.

⁶⁸ Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 16.

⁶⁹ Karl Barth, *CD III/1*: 235.

⁷⁰ Karl Barth, *CD III/1*: 23.

⁷¹ Geoff Thompson, "'Remaining Loyal to the Earth': Humanity, God's Other Creatures and the Bible in Karl Barth," 193.

to our purposes, “there was no man to work the ground.” An additional gap might be seen in the sense of indeterminacy the animals have before Adam names them. Their identity, for which their name is a symbol, awaits some manner of human blessing and, in many cases, cooperation.⁷² Finally, considering the imagery of Eden as a place of communion and God’s unique presence—a type of temple—there is a gap between the space designated for this exemplification and the full expansion possible.⁷³ In all these examples we see the glory and goodness of a portion of creation tied to its subordination to wise human care. Plants and animals are not props and scenery; they are necessary community members over which humanity exercises delegated authority from God. Their full development in some sense is wrapped up in this loving stewardship. Barth continues by exploring the manner in which animals serve as examples of praise of the Creator and of creaturely limitation:

The creature precedes man in a self-evident praise of its Creator, in the natural fulfilment of the destiny given to it at its creation, the actual humble recognition and confirmation of its creatureliness. It also precedes him in the fact that it does not forget but maintains its animal nature, with its dignity and also its limitation, and thus asks man whether and to what extent the same can be said of him.⁷⁴

Meditation on the vastness of creation humbles the human ego, even the occasional theologically-informed perversion of humanity’s place in the world. God does not just care about his image-bearers. He is said to care deeply about his created world—one thinks of the end of the book of Jonah—and take particular delight in his handiwork.⁷⁵ At the end of

⁷² This theme is most developed by the Patristics. For example, Chrysostom writes: “It is clear that man in the beginning had complete authority over the animals. . . . But that now we are afraid and terrified of beasts and do not have authority over them, this I do not deny. . . . In the beginning it was not so, but the beasts feared and trembled and submitted to their master in service. But when through disobedience he lost boldness, then also his authority was diminished” (*Homilies on Genesis, IX, 4*). Yoram Hazony offers an intriguing reading of the Cain and Abel story related to this point. He argues Cain failed to fully cooperate with the animal kingdom, instead aping the example of the agriculturally-based kingdoms of Egypt and Persia in tilling the cursed ground. In contrast, Abel utilizes the natural thistle- and thorn-eating instincts of sheep, cows, and goats, thereby responding to God’s curse and ultimately inviting his blessing (Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 119).

⁷³ The Genesis narrative does not suggest the Garden of Eden was intended to expand (in fact, in the second and third chapters we do not even find the command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”), but there is reason for reading this into the idea of God’s unique presence with his people. The promised land of Israel is occasionally referred to as like the “garden of Eden” (Isa. 51:3; Joel 2:3; Ezek. 36:35), and the new heavens and new earth evoke both Edenic and temple imagery.

⁷⁴ Karl Barth *CD* III/1: 177.

⁷⁵ At the same time, a picture of earth as our mother is also not appropriate. Additionally, in contrast to Paul Santmire’s fraternal imagery—*Brother Earth*—G. K. Chesterton muses on the sororal picture both he and Pope Francis (in the recent encyclical *Laudato Si*) prefer: “The main point of Christianity was this: that Nature is not our mother: Nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father; but she

Psalm 104, after surveying waters, mountains, trees, rock badgers, lions, and sea creatures, the psalmist enjoins his Sovereign: “may the Lord rejoice in his works” (v. 31b). Earlier in the same psalm Leviathan is said to have been created as a plaything of God (v. 26). We read in Job that the wild donkey laughs at the tumult of the city, “that quintessential human habitation” (Job 39:7).⁷⁶ Kathryn Schifferdecker describes how the divine speeches in Job show that the world is “radically non-anthropocentric,” that there exist wild places and animals whose value has nothing to do with their usefulness to humanity, and that God delights in the freedom of these diverse creatures.⁷⁷

Let us now turn to the question of how an appreciative rejection of sacramental ontology informs Christian thought and practice. A number of the implications have already been discussed: the thorny metaphysical challenges, the threat to the uniqueness of the Incarnation, and the muting of Scripture’s vernacular language. There are two further implications worth noting. First, an ontology of fellowship or covenant (or whatever name this more discriminating approach takes) seems to offer more resources for the poor and the oppressed. It seems difficult for sacramental ontology to not imply that there simply are more and less graced zones of creation—that in some sense the participation of the created world with the divine nature is uneven. Denying this surrenders all kinds of goods the sacramental thinkers deeply cherish. But if this is true, the quarry worker in Haiti seems to be handicapped compared to the organist. An ontology of fellowship acknowledges the intended purposes of creation, some notion of “higher” and “lower” goods, but argues that the critical distinction in this age is between those who know Christ and those who do not, and further, that Christ is spiritually present to all who call on his name.

The second pastoral challenge to sacramental ontology concerns our ability to appreciate creation for what it is in itself, not simply as a pointer to higher divine realities. Robert Farrar Capon writes:

Things must be met for themselves. To take them only for their meaning is to convert them into gods—to make them too important, and therefore to make *them* unimportant altogether. Idolatry has

has no authority over us; we have to admire, but not to imitate. This gives to the typically Christian pleasure in this earth a strange touch of lightness that is almost frivolity. Nature was a solemn mother to the worshippers of Isis and Cybele. Nature was a solemn mother to Wordsworth or to Emerson. But Nature is not solemn to Francis of Assisi or to George Herbert. To St. Francis, Nature is a sister, and even a younger sister: a little, dancing sister, to be laughed at as well as loved.” G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909), 119.

⁷⁶ Kathryn Schifferdecker, “Creation Theology,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2008), 70.

⁷⁷ Kathryn Schifferdecker, *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Divinity School, 2008), 9.

two faults. It is not only a slur on the true God; it is also an insult to true things.⁷⁸

We should not casually accuse anyone of idol worship. But the point is insightful: focusing on the revelatory function of God's creation can eventually give way to inattention to what God has actually made. As ever, Christian wisdom must discern the fruit of any theological system. Praise to God, gratitude for the good gift of creation, and loving stewardship ought to be our aim.

⁷⁸ Robert Farrar Capon, *The Supper of the Lamb: A Culinary Reflection* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 20.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BODY: DISCOVERING NATURAL
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

MATTHEW MASON¹

Self-expression, choice, tolerance, authenticity: these ideals form the modern West's understanding of what it means to be free and therefore fully human. At their root is the assumption that personal autonomy is indispensable for the good life. Our culture has shaped us (note the irony) to assume that in order to be free, our choices must be unfettered, and that individual self-actualization is the highest good. This is true in many areas of life, but not least in relation to our bodies. It is also a matter of morality. In Charles Taylor's description, ours is the Age of Authenticity,² marked by "expressive individualism." On this understanding of personhood, "each one of us has his or her own way of realizing our humanity," and thus "it's important to find a way to live out one's own [identity], as against surrendering conformity with a model imposed on us from outside."³ Thus Michel Foucault argued that morality must not be understood as conforming to a rule or an external norm; it requires a "relationship to the self" that involves "not simply 'self-awareness' but self-formation as an 'ethical subject.'"⁴ Autonomous freedom shapes our understanding of gender. For Judith Butler, bodies are not self-interpreting, and so gender is not given by biology. Rather, one's gender identity is socially constructed, formed by discourse. Gender identity is "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts."⁵ It is therefore malleable and can be changed through other discursive acts. These are not just abstract philosophical ideas; they have profoundly shaped how we as a society view ourselves and each other in relation to our bodies, our sex, and our gender.

This article takes a contrary position. It addresses the question of what it means to be human as revealed to us in nature and Scripture, by the structure of our bodies and their twofold form as male and female. Borrowing from the Spanish philosopher Julián Marías, I shall refer to this as our *sexuate* condition. Marías notes the distinction in Spanish between the adjectives *sexual* and *sexuado* (*sexuate*). The latter is more

¹ Matthew Mason is the Rector of Christ Church Salisbury, Salisbury, United Kingdom

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 473-505.

³ Taylor, *Secular Age*, 475.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Uses of Pleasure* (London: Penguin, 1992), 28.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), 140-41.

comprehensive, referring to everything that is involved in our being sexed, whereas the former is narrower in scope, referring to our sexual activity, which is “founded on the sexuate condition of human life in general.”⁶

The way our culture views freedom, choice, and humanness means that the individual will is utterly sovereign over nature, including our sexuate nature. Therefore, the self is regarded as highly malleable, in accordance with the dictates of the sovereign will. A Christian moral theology of our condition as sexuate beings should be attentive to the will in both its right function and its dysfunction due to sin, but should also pay careful attention to nature.⁷ There is a givenness to reality, and therefore a givenness to our sexuate condition, which is inscribed by God in our bodies in creation.

In these questions, what is at stake is holiness, but also health, healing, and wholeness;⁸ in a word, *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing.

Within the church, debates about what it means to be male and female rumble on, at least among evangelicals. On the one hand, the conversation focuses almost exclusively on gender roles, headship, and submission. On the other hand, the controversy with the wider church and culture, and increasingly within evangelical churches, is over same-sex sexuality. But relatively little attention is given to more fundamental questions of what it means to be male or female in the first place. The broader trend in the West is illustrated by a recent *YouGov* survey in Britain, which revealed that only 39 percent of young men and 42 percent of young women have a positive perception of masculinity.⁹ Startlingly, only 2 percent of young men (the 18-24 year age bracket) identify themselves as completely masculine, and only 24 percent identify as almost completely masculine, compared with 56 percent and 74 percent of over-65s. The gap for women is smaller but still significant, with 39 percent of 18-24s identifying as almost completely feminine, compared with 79 percent of over-65s. If this is an accurate reflection of British society as a whole, it indicates that an entire generation of young men in particular, but also young women to a large degree, have, perhaps in their rejection of the stereotypes of earlier generations, lost the capacity or the desire to inhabit their masculinity and femininity. This raises significant questions both pastorally and apologetically. As Christians seek to raise a new generation of healthy

⁶ Julián Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology: The Empirical Structure of Human Life*, trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (University Park, Penn.: London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 133-34.

⁷ Cf. C. S. Lewis: “For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique” (*The Abolition of Man* [New York: Macmillan, 1960], 48).

⁸ Wendell Berry notes the family connection in English between the words health, heal, whole, wholesome, hale, hallow, and holy, in “The Body and the Earth,” in *The Unsettling of America* (San Francisco: Avon Books, 1977), 97-142 at 103. The essay is also included in Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2002), 93-134, citation at 98-99.

⁹ <<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/05/13/low-young-masculinity-britain/>> [last accessed May 23, 2016].

and whole disciples of Christ, we need to reflect carefully on what that means for the way we live as male and female. What goal should parental nurture of a girl or a boy aim at? What does it mean to cultivate a healthy masculinity or femininity, while avoiding unhealthy cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity? How can we learn to inhabit our bodies in obedient, whole, and thankful ways? And, given the authority of Christ the Creator and risen Lord over all nations, societies, and cultures, what does the church in the West have to say in his name to the culture(s) we inhabit regarding our shared sexuate humanity?

The task of this article is to begin to excavate a stable foundation on which we can construct a safe and attractive edifice of masculinity and femininity. It will do so by attending to the natural patterns of male and female as they are revealed in creation to natural reason,¹⁰ and also, more briefly, to the direction given by Holy Scripture in its account of our creation as male and female. But before considering what created

¹⁰ Space forbids a detailed justification of the use of natural law reasoning in fully and consistently Protestant theological ethics. Although some would argue (perhaps following Van Til, perhaps Barth) that the noetic effects of sin neuter the natural law, this is, in my estimation, mistaken. Over the past decade there has been a significant recovery of an older Reformed tradition of natural law reasoning. For the classic medieval statement which remains very influential among contemporary natural law theorists, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae, q.91. For the place of natural law in Reformed ethics historically, and reasons for its decline in the twentieth century, see Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006); cf. also Jennifer Herdt, "Calvin's Legacy for Contemporary Reformed Natural Law," *SJT*, 67/4 (2014): 414-37; Neil Arner, "Precedents and Prospects for Incorporating Natural Law in Protestant Ethics," *SJT*, 69/4 (2016): 375-88. For a selection of historical sources in the Reformed natural law tradition, see the excellent Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics and Law series produced by the Acton Institute, including Johannes Althusius, *On Law and Power*, trans. Jeffrey J. Veenstra (Grand Rapids, Mich.: CLP Academic, 2013); Franciscus Junius, *The Mosaic Polity*, trans. Todd M. Rester (Grand Rapids, Mich.: CLP Academic, 2015); Girolamo Zanchi, *On the Law in General*, trans. Jeffrey J. Veenstra (Grand Rapids, Mich.: CLP Academic, 2012); also the classic Anglican statement of Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I, in *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr Richard Hooker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), Vol. 1, 145-228. Anglican readers will know that it is far from uncontroversial to describe Hooker as a Reformed theologian, but see Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason: Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997); Torrance Kirby, "Richard Hooker's Discourse on Natural Law in the Context of the Magisterial Reformation," *Animus*, 3 (1998): 30-49; W. Bradford Littlejohn, "The Search for a Reformed Hooker: Some Modest Proposals," *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 16/1 (April 2014): 68-82; and W. Bradford Littlejohn, *Richard Hooker: A Companion to His Life and Work* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2015), 52-68. For arguments addressing specifically Van Tilian concerns about the noetic effects of sin, see Laurence O'Donnell, "'Bavinck's Bug' or 'Van Tilian Hypochondria'? An Analysis of Prof. Oliphint's Assertion That Cognitive Realism and Reformed Theology Are Incompatible," in Peter J. Escalante and W. Bradford Littlejohn, eds., *For the Healing of the Nations: Essays on Creation, Redemption, and Neo-Calvinism* (Burford, UK: The Davenant Trust, 2014), 139-71; and for a helpful explanation of why, for Calvin, the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that natural law is completely inaccessible to fallen minds see Arner, "Precedents and Prospects," 381-3. See also, more generally, the assumptions in the Reformed natural law texts listed above.

nature teaches concerning our sexuate condition, we will first consider the authority of the body more generally.

I. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BODY

Our culture is right: we do have great authority over our bodies. We can mold them in many ways. Through controlling, or failing to control, my diet, I can affect my body's weight. Through exercise I can alter the size, strength, and shape of my muscles and the efficiency and longevity of my heart and lungs. I can change the pigmentation of my skin through tattooing, which also, depending on the nature of the tattoos, marks my body as belonging to a particular tribe or gang or a particular aesthetic or social subculture. Thus the body is stamped as mine and encoded as a site of social communication.

Nevertheless, there are strict limits on the authority my will can exercise over my body. I am five feet eleven inches tall, and no amount of youthful longing ever caused me to reach six feet. The human body has no wings and a rather small sternum relative to body mass; so no strength of desire or flapping of the arms can turn running (or falling) into flying. There are natural limits to how fast any given human can run, and for some the limits are more restrictive than for others. Sometimes we long to transcend these limits, as the story of Daedalus and Icarus so poignantly reminds us, and we look on some animals with "a strange biological 'envy', as if ... 'dispossessed' or stripped of their properties."¹¹ With the aid of aeronautics we venture where Icarus could not, but only with the aid of artificial wings; my body remains as limited as ever, even when cruising at 40,000 feet over the Atlantic courtesy of British Airways. My ability to fly remains extrinsic rather than intrinsic to my body.¹²

Death is particularly revealing, because it is the ultimate example of my body's authority over me. We fear death, and we resist it. But, slowly or suddenly, painfully or peacefully, the body exerts its authority over even our strongest desires, until we can no longer resist.¹³ Death reveals that my body is not just a useful tool like a knife or a car. "I" the person am not somehow hidden behind it, distinct from it; I suffuse my body throughout. In a real, though not reductively materialist sense, my body is myself. I am an ensouled body, or an embodied soul. So when my body dies, I die.¹⁴

¹¹ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 132.

¹² Rapid advances in technology are beginning to challenge some of the limitations our bodies place on us. Transhumanist ideologies see this as a great advance, but that discussion is for another day.

¹³ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (reprint; New York; London: Continuum, 2006; first published 1986), 151.

¹⁴ I leave aside, for now, questions of the intermediate state. Although at the moment of death my soul departs to be with Christ, when my body dies in this world, I die in and to this world. I am separated from the world and from those who remain in it (although still, in a sense, one with believers in Christ, in the communion of the saints) and will only become a part of the world again when my body and soul are reunited on the day it is finally and perfectly renewed in the resurrection.

There is, therefore, a reciprocal authority relationship between my will and my body. My will can subjugate my body in all kinds of ways, but if I am wise, I will respond thoughtfully and wisely to the basic structures of my embodied existence and behave in a way that leads to incarnate health and flourishing. This does not mean that my will is, or should be, at the mercy of my body in every way, nor that I should resign myself to, or even embrace, my body's drives. Unlike other animals, humans are *rational* animals. In a different idiom, we are unique in being persons. Humans are reflective, which includes the capacity for self-reflection: we have a first person perspective on our own existence, and so on our own bodies. Part of the blessing of dominion (Gen. 1:28), indeed, the central part, from which all other responsible dominion flows, is dominion over ourselves, our thoughts, desires, wills, and bodies.¹⁵

Sexually, this reciprocal relationship of body and will has enormous significance. The sexuate form of my body, which is either male or female, exercises a legitimate authority over me.¹⁶ It should, and *inescapably does*, shape a particular set of responses in me. These responses are shaped by my culture, which is in turn a particular set of human social responses to nature's forms. In this way, shaped by both nature and culture, my personal awareness of my body with its sexuate form flowers into my gender.¹⁷

However, although the sexuate form of my body is authoritative, this does not mean that my will is passive, subject to all of my body's sexual desires and functions. Roger Scruton makes this point by a digression on the dual role of male and female sexual organs, which are used not only for sexual acts, but also for excretion, which, in the early stages of life, is their exclusive use. In this way, our early, presexual use of our genitals teaches us an important lesson about their sexual use. Urination is "a vital and regularly exercised function, which we can control, but which lies importantly beyond the reach of our intentions. It is our steady observation of, and familiarity with, this function that prepares us for the drama of the sexual act."¹⁸ Unlike other bodily functions—the beating of the heart, the production of bile—"When I urinate, my life and activity are for a moment interrupted.... I allow the body to 'have its way,' consciously that I cannot resist its imperium."¹⁹

Although Scruton considers the authority of the sexual organs over the self in this nonsexual way, he does not explore how this is a reciprocal relationship. Urination teaches us that we are under our body's dominion,

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., the premium placed on self-control as a central Christian virtue produced by the gospel in Paul's letter to Titus, in contrast to a lifestyle of slavery to the passions that was criticized even by one of Crete's own poets, Epimenides (Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5, 6, 12; contrast 1:10, 12; 3:3).

¹⁶ Constraints of space mean that I cannot discuss intersex conditions in this article. I hope to address them in the future.

¹⁷ The issue of transgender is highly relevant here; see Matthew Mason, "The Wounded It Heals: Gender Dysphoria and the Resurrection of the Body," in Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, eds., *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: The Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, forthcoming).

¹⁸ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 150.

¹⁹ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 151.

subject to its demands. But it also trains us in mastery of our bodies as we grow to maturity. Infants lack control of the excretory process; an important part of growth to maturity is slowly learning to master our bodies. None of us ever gains full control of our excretory functions, and we must submit ourselves to them at some point and allow nature to take its course. But unlike nonrational animals, we are not driven purely by bodily urges; we learn to subjugate them and control their use. This is an important part of being persons, social animals and stewards of creation. In different situations we control our urges so as to give ourselves more effectively to a particular task or for the sake of good manners in social situations. We learn to plan our lives and our bodily functions so as to travel or work or eat or worship with minimum inconvenience and interruption. In this way, before puberty, our bodies have already trained us, through our sexual organs, that we can control these organs, and so can learn to control them sexually. This is what sexual maturity means; *sexual incontinence* is a sign of an infantilized person or society.

The authority of the body, including the authority of our sexual organs, is also manifest in our sexuate condition, which, as we shall see, is founded on our bodily constitution as male or female. A child is born. The midwife speaks: "It's a girl!" As we are welcomed into the world, the sex of our bodies is noted and proclaimed. Even though many parents now discover their child's sex *in utero*, via ultrasound, most often the discovery is kept secret from others until the birth is announced. The joy of birth is the joy of discovery, and included in this is the joy of sexual discovery. Thus we see the authority of the body's sex, even before the child, the subject of that body, becomes aware of it.

Oliver O'Donovan has recently described ethics as the task of being inducted into a reality that is already present to us and of which we are already, at least dimly, aware. We already live in the interlocking realities of self, world, and time; but in order to live morally and wisely, we must awaken to this situation. As we awake, "What seems like the beginning is not really a beginning at all. We wake to find things going on, and ourselves in the midst of them. The beginning is simply the dawning of our consciousness, our coming-to to what is already happening and how we are already placed."²⁰ We awake *in medias res*. Therefore, we awake to our place in time, which did not begin with us or start anew at the moment of our birth. We are born into an inheritance, a history of family, nation, and world, and so we are born into a place in time and in a tradition. Thus we are placed into a culture that will mold and shape our maleness and femaleness in accordance with its own distinctive conceptions of masculine and feminine ideals.

However, culture is not the only force working to shape our gendered experience of our bodies. As we awake, we become aware of the world, which with its structures and patterns existed long before we did, and also long before the culture we inhabit. This world is not just the raw material out of which lives and cultures are formed; it is a creation with an "order

²⁰ Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology 1, An Induction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), 2.

and coherence *in* which it is composed.”²¹ As a creation, it is ordered externally, to its Creator.²² It originates from, and is ordered to, the One who made it for himself and sustains and directs its existence. It also has an internal order and coherence, precisely because it is an ordered whole, the unified creation of one Creator.²³ Without order, there “would be a plurality of entities so completely unrelated that there would be no ‘world’ in which they existed together, no relation in which they could be thought together.”²⁴ There would be chaos. Psalm 104 gives a beautiful poetic description of this ordered coherence, with diverse habitats for different species (vv. 10-18, 25-26), varied patterns of animal behavior (vv. 11-12, 14, 17-18, 20-23, 25-26), and humans with their unique place and pattern of life, including work (vv. 14-15, 23). For humans, the ground does not simply bring forth food; it must be cultivated for the wine, bread, and oil that strengthen, gladden, and cause to shine.

The internal ordering of creation comprises both “teleological order,” ordering to an end or *telos*, and “generic order,” order of kind.²⁵ Trees and birds are different kinds, but trees are ordered toward birds as habitat for them to nest in (cf. v. 12). Gazelles and lions are different kinds, but gazelles are ordered toward lions as food (cf. v. 21). Wheat, grapes, olives, and humans are different kinds, but they are ordered toward man to provide bread for strength, wine for joy, and oil for anointing (vv. 14-15). Here, though, the picture is more complex, because bread, wine, and oil are all products of human skill, tradition, and social life. Where humans are involved, culture intervenes in the natural order (cf. *agriculture*, *viticulture*). However, as this example illustrates, human culture is itself shaped by, and should respect, the natural order of the world with its discrete kinds and *teloi*. Soil does not provide food for man, wheat does. Or, rather, soil *does* provide when, as both natural and cultural beings, we respect the structures of creation and cultivate the ground—fertilizing, sowing, watering, reaping, rotating, resting—to bring forth wheat, grapes, and olive trees. Precisely because we are cultural animals, geographically and temporally located social beings, we are inheritors of place and tradition, natural and cultural resources, summoned by our nature to pass on tradition and place to those who follow. Humans are stewards, and if we are wise, we will live in time and place in a way that at least does no harm; we will pass on what we have received in the condition we received it. Better yet, we will hand on place and tradition, nature and culture, enriched by our care. This requires wisdom, which requires loving attention to the structures of the natural world, so that our culture *cultivates* rather than pillaging and depleting the natural order. Culture and society do not exist independently

²¹ Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, second edition (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 31. Hereafter cited as *RMO*.

²² *RMO*, 31.

²³ *RMO*, 31.

²⁴ *RMO*, 32.

²⁵ *RMO*, 32.

of nature; unless they are to be parasitic and ultimately destructive, they must respect nature's structures.²⁶

Applied to the natural structure of our bodies as male and female, this implies that we are not free to interpret our bodies on a whim, simply as we see fit. Gender, with its roots in bodily sex, is not infinitely plastic, capable of being molded to our whims. Nor is it purely culturally or socially constructed. As social and cultural beings, humans always already live within our natural environment and are responsive to it for good or ill. Our dominion is a responsive dominion, responsive to the pattern of the world, including our bodies over which we rule. We are therefore called to responsible stewardship of our bodies with their structural integrity as male and female.

We have been discovering that creation has authority over us, or perhaps better, "The created order contains 'authorities' which have their own relative authority over us."²⁷ In an illuminating discussion of authority, O'Donovan argues that "what we encounter in the world... makes it meaningful for us to act. An authority is something which, by virtue of its kind constitutes an immediate and sufficient ground for acting." Authority is "one aspect of the teleological structure of the universe," providing "grounds' of action."²⁸ When we grasp the objective structures of the natural order, they call forth appropriate action, drawing us in particular directions, shaping particular forms of life.

Since God has ordered and sustains this creation, the authority of creation is God's authority. The authorities within creation "owe their power, as they owe their being, to his creative gift and to his continual affirmation of that gift in sustaining providence."²⁹ This does not mean that all authority is only and directly divine authority: the "gift was really given."³⁰ Authorities within creation "have their own relative finality."³¹ "Authority really is vested in creaturely existence. God, in creating, has effected not only other beings, but other powers, yet without in any way diminishing his own sovereign being and power."³² Our bodies are among these authorities, having their own integrity, including a structure and a teleology, both of which exercise authority over us.

So far, with a little help from Psalm 104, I have been constructing a natural law argument that the dimorphic³³ shape of our bodies as male or female has authority to shape our understanding of sex and gender. This understanding is culturally shaped, because when I awake to the form

²⁶ This paragraph is heavily influenced by Wendell Berry. Perhaps the place to start is his selected essays, *The Art of the Commonplace*, cited above, n. 7. For a more philosophically rigorous account of our relationship to the world, which chimes very closely with Berry's, see Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012).

²⁷ *RMO*, 122.

²⁸ *RMO*, 122.

²⁹ *RMO*, 124.

³⁰ *RMO*, 124.

³¹ *RMO*, 123.

³² *RMO*, 124.

³³ I.e., existing in two forms.

of the human body—my own, others who are both like me (male) and those who are unlike me (female)—I awake to them *in medias res*, in a cultural context that I have inherited; the beginning of my self-awareness is not *the* beginning. However, my self-awareness is awareness of myself as an embodied person, and, in relation to bodies, my culture is not *the* beginning either. As cultural beings, humans are responsive to the natural order of creation, and so to the natural order of our bodies, which are dimorphic: male and female. Having laid this groundwork, we now turn to consider what nature reveals about the meaning of male and female.

II. THE MEANING OF MALE AND FEMALE

Much confusion and skepticism about gender differences arises from starting in the wrong place, with “Men are from Mars” pop psychology. Statistically there *are* many differences between men and women. Psychological surveys reveal that there are “numerous patterned differences between the sexes,”³⁴ which fall out along the lines of traditional gender stereotypes. These differences are consistent across age groups and cultures and, strikingly, are more pronounced in Western egalitarian cultures than in traditional patriarchal cultures. For example, women tend to score more highly in nurture, tenderness, anxiousness, and trustfulness, while men tend to be more assertive, open to new ideas, and interested in excitement.³⁵ This is confirmed by the research of Simon Baron-Cohen, professor of developmental psychopathology at the University of Cambridge and director of the University’s Autism Research Centre. The provocative thesis of *The Essential Difference*, based on twenty years of research, is that “The female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems.”³⁶ Note the claim: this is not simply social construction, but hard-wiring: there are *essential* differences. Note also the qualifier: the female brain is *predominantly*, not exclusively, hard-wired in a particular way. We will therefore expect to find women with more “male” characteristics and vice versa. Budziszewski also draws on neuroscience research that shows “marked, pervasive, and consistent” differences in the structure of male and female brains. He pictures brain organization as “two complex mosaics—one male and one female—that are similar in many respects but very different in others.”³⁷ Viewing the body as a whole, one obvious way to see the differences between male and female bodies, and these differences as natural, not merely socially constructed, is to look at measures of athletic performance. For example, in track events, female world record holders are considerably slower than their male counterparts; they also lag behind Men’s Division III champions.³⁸

³⁴ J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2012), 46.

³⁵ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 46–48.

³⁶ Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference* (London: Penguin, 2003), 1.

³⁷ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 38–39; he is quoting neuroscientist Larry Cahill.

³⁸ Scott Yenor, “A Sporting Difference: On Men’s and Women’s Athletics,” *The Public Discourse*, April 4, 2016; <<http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2016/04/16614/>> [last

However, in each of these cases—personality traits, brain wiring, strength—the differences between the sexes are not absolute. Who is not familiar with a marriage in which the wife is taller than her husband or more assertive, or where the man is the more empathetic or less driven to understand and build systems? Taking strength as an example, average strength for men and women can both be plotted on bell curves, but although the female curve falls considerably lower than the male curve, there is also overlap: stronger women in a particular age bracket outperform weaker men in that bracket.

The large statistical overlap in physical, mental, and psychological characteristics should not surprise us. Men and women both belong to the same species and are both made in God's image; their similarities obviously outweigh their differences. However, people often conclude that the reported differences are therefore not differences between the sexes, but differences between persons regardless of sex; if there is a bias in favor of one sex or the other, this results from cultural conditioning. One partial answer is to try a thought experiment. Do not focus on individual men and women, with the inherent danger of nominalism that implies. Instead imagine walking into two rooms at a party. The first is full of women, the second, men. Instinctively, it is obvious that the tone and atmosphere of the rooms feel different, and different again from a room containing a mix of men and women. One has the feeling in one room of being at home, in the other of being in alien territory. This illustration points towards an underlying real difference between the sexes, albeit one that is somewhat mysterious and not clearly instantiated in every respect in every individual.

Statistical observations are helpful in confirming the reality of differences between the sexes. However, it is better to begin not with personality traits, nor with athletic performance, but with the natural form of the human body, which exists in two natural forms: male and female.

When I awake to myself, I awake to myself as male, inhabiting the world in a male body, in relationship to other persons who are male, and also to persons who are female. But what does this mean? What is the significance of the natural structure of our bodies in their sexuate condition? In the dim morning light, the sleep still in my eyes, what do I see?

The most obvious difference between male and female bodies is invisible most of the time, because it is concealed by the clothes we wear.³⁹ But at birth the difference is obvious and provides immediate evidence of the baby's sex. From birth, male and female bodies are obviously sexed, and the contrasting forms of male and female genitalia are clearly distinct.⁴⁰ It is important that this is the first difference observable between the sexes. In the early months of life, other differences are practically invisible. Most

accessed May 23, 2016].

³⁹ Although, in a different sense, our clothes reveal our gender; cf. Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 268-73.

⁴⁰ Space constraints mean that I must reserve discussion of intersex conditions for another occasion.

parents know the experience of the polite but hesitant stranger cooing over the baby in the stroller, unsure whether he is handsome or she is beautiful. But it does not take long for physical differences between boys and girls to begin to reveal themselves, and they become very clear at the point of sexual maturation. In addition to the concealed genital and gonadal differences between male and female bodies, in normal sexual development the sexes begin to reveal themselves more fully as hormonal differences lead to the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts and facial hair and differences in musculature, size and shape of shoulders and hips, pitch and timbre of voice.

It is interesting that although these differences are sexuate and clearly demarcate the sexes one from the other, many of the differences are not obviously sexual. Genitals and gonads clearly are, as are breasts, which are used for nursing the children produced through sexual intercourse. However, the deep voice of a man compared with the high voice of a woman plays no explicit role in sexual intercourse and reproduction. Yet it consistently marks an observable, physical difference between men and women, and even in the case of a particular man whose voice is higher than a particular woman's, the tone and timbre of the voice makes it clear to a listener who is the male and who the female.

However, these differences are not just revealed generally in our bodies. They are also, and perhaps particularly, revealed in our faces.⁴¹ This is a matter of great importance. It means that the differences between the sexes are clear even when other differences between our bodies are concealed. More importantly, in this way the differences between the sexes are shown to be not simply biological but personal. As Roger Scruton observes, the face reveals the person; it is the bodily locus of personhood and personality, "a symbol of the individual and a display of his individuality." It therefore reveals that people "are individual animals; but they are also individual persons."⁴² "The eyes that look at me are your eyes, and also you: the mouth that speaks and the cheeks that blush are you."⁴³ Again, "When I confront another person face to face I am not confronting a physical part of him, as I am when, for example, I look at his shoulder or his knee. I am confronting *him*."⁴⁴ This is also significant sexually:

Why do eyes, mouth, nose and brow transfix us, when they have so little relation to the sexual prowess and bodily perfection of their bearer? The answer is simple: the face is the primary expression of consciousness, and to see *in the face* the object of sexual attraction is to find the focus which all attraction requires—the focus on another's existence, as a being who can be aware of *me*.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Mariás, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 141-51.

⁴² Roger Scruton, *The Face of God* (New York; London: Continuum, 2012), 88; cf. Mariás, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 143-4.

⁴³ Scruton, *Face of God*, 88.

⁴⁴ Scruton, *Face of God*, 80.

⁴⁵ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 23.

The face reveals the person, and it reveals the person's sex. Male and female faces are recognizably different. Although "minimally *sexual*" the face is "maximally *sexuate*; it is precisely that portion of human reality in which the male or female becomes present."⁴⁶ Once infancy has passed, there is rarely any confusion whether one is looking at the face of a girl or a boy. This is all the more so when sexual maturity is reached. The strong chin and thicker eyebrows of a man or the more delicate features of a female face are instantly recognizable. When men do not shave, the beard is the clearest marker of the male face, and, interestingly, cultures that prefer clean-shaven men tend to compensate with makeup for women.⁴⁷ Although there is such a thing as "masculine" beauty in a woman or "feminine" good looks in a man, the adjective qualifies something that is still real and still recognizably belongs to its own sex.

These observations are important for two reasons. First, the face, which reveals the person and provides the locus of his or her personal presence, is part of the body. The face therefore reveals that persons are not separate from their bodies, but rather present in them. With its expressive eyes, tears, smiles, frowns, the face renders the body personal. Secondly, because the face is personal *and* sexuate, it reveals that biological sex is not merely biological. My biological sex is fully a part of who I am *as a person*. The face "alludes to the rest of the body,"⁴⁸ but it does so in a way that personalizes our body's sex. Bodily sex and personal gender are not separate things; they are harmonious, the one present and expressed in the other. Just as I am not a person who happens to have a body, so I am not a fundamentally asexual person who happens to have a male body. I am a man. "[T]he face is the center of organization for all corporeality... we do not see a body which at one end is surmounted by a face; rather, we see *someone*, present in his face, *to whom* that body as a whole belongs."⁴⁹

Children recognize this and respond differently to men and women from early in life.⁵⁰ But what does a mature awakening to our dimorphic bodily form mean? In particular, what does it mean for us not just as animals, but as *persons*? The answer is found in the first, and therefore original, bodily characteristic that marks male from female: our sexual organs.

Our sexual organs are unique.⁵¹ Every other organ exists and fulfills its natural function within one body. I see by myself, and I digest food by myself. Even those organs that need one another in order to work together—the heart and lungs in the circulatory system, for example—do so within the same body. Male and female sexual organs are different. They do not function *as sexual organs* on their own; they need each other.

⁴⁶ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 144.

⁴⁷ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 142.

⁴⁸ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 145.

⁴⁹ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 148; italics in original.

⁵⁰ Marías, *Metaphysical Anthropology*, 141.

⁵¹ On this see, e.g., Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 24-29; and Edward Feser, "In Defense of the Perverted Faculty Argument," in *Neo-Scholastic Essays* (South Bend, Ind.: St Augustine's Press, 2015), 378-415, at 378-98.

On analogy with the circulatory system, it is as if the man had the heart and the woman the lungs. Our bodies are, in this one important respect, incomplete by themselves; they are designed to work together, for the purpose of reproduction.⁵² For this to take place, one set of male and one set of female sexual organs, which is to say one male and one female *body*, which is to say one male and one female *person*, are necessary.

As we awake to this reality, we learn therefore that our sexual powers serve a twofold purpose: procreative and unitive. Our bodies serve a procreative purpose because this is how our species reproduces. They serve a unitive purpose because as a man and a woman come together in *coitus*, their sexual organs work together to form an organic union. This is not just a biological union, because the organs are possessed not by bodies, but by persons with faces, one male and one female, who are not simply joined to one another biologically, but are known to one another and united personally.

This in turn teaches us important lessons about male and female persons. First, it teaches that although male and female are distinct bodily forms within the same species, they do not and cannot exist separately from one another. We are designed to be both *from* and *for* one another. No man exists who does not have a mother; no woman exists who does not have a father, at least biologically speaking. Man is from woman, and woman is from man. But our sexual design, which shapes our lives as persons, teaches our need of one another for the fulfillment of the *telos* of our bodies in the propagation of our species. This is true biologically and sexually. But our sexual union, the union of persons in intercourse, is the center of a far broader social reality as the union of man and woman spreads out through procreation into the family and then through the family into society and nation as a whole.

Secondly, it teaches us the fundamental meaning of masculinity and femininity, in which all other differences find their root. The fundamental meaning of manhood is paternity, and the fundamental meaning of womanhood is maternity, and this is universally true. It is true biologically, even for those who cannot or choose not to have children of their own. It is true for a celibate single man, whose body contains the potential for paternity, even if this potential is never realized. It is true for an infertile man, because infertility is not essential to his body and its meaning, but rather accidental, caused by a defect in his sexual organs. In contrast, even a fertile married woman could never father a child; her inability to be a father is not accidental to her, because her body bears the essential maternal meaning that is unique to her sex. It is also true in a deeper and more pervasive sense because our bodily sex is not separate from our identity as persons. Consider a man who fathers four different children by four different mothers, abandoning each mother and child in turn before moving on to a new sexual conquest. Is such a man a father? In one sense, yes. But in a deeper and more important sense, no, because the meaning of paternity is not just procreation, but provision and protection, faithful love

⁵² Leaving aside language of design, as Feser notes, there is nothing in this description that a Darwinian naturalist could not accept (Feser, "Defense," 390).

and nurture. Now consider a woman who is biologically unable to have children, but who, with her husband, welcomes foster children into her home, pouring love and nurture into their lives. Is such a woman a mother? In the biological sense, no; but because the meaning of motherhood is nurture and sacrificial, self-giving love she is more truly a mother than someone who bears a child before neglecting it until it leaves home. Thus, a woman who never bears a child does not cease to be a woman. Nor is her womanhood diminished, even if she never cares for children, for she maintains the capacity and freedom to live in a maternal way toward others in need of maternal nurture. In this larger sense, “all women are called to motherhood” and “all men are called to fatherhood.”⁵³

A moment’s reflection reveals this pattern time and again in our churches. I think of an older couple who never had children, but who mentor younger couples and welcome single men and women into their home for weekends of rest, refreshment, and companionship. I think of a single woman who hosts sleepovers for younger girls and teenagers in her church. I think of a single man who devotes time, energy, and love to discipling younger men. I think of how older girls and boys in our congregation play with and care for babies and toddlers and begin to learn the habits and skills of parents themselves. I think of an older widow who pays particular attention to one younger same-sex attracted single man, making sure to give him a hug, an act that is not sexual, narrowly understood, but is certainly sexual in a deeply maternal sense.

Building on his argument about male paternity and female maternity, Budziszewski argues that “Manhood in general is outward-directed,” toward the world, whereas “womanhood in general is inward-directed,” though not in a narcissistic sense, “for the genius of woman includes caring for the local circle.”⁵⁴ He describes what this might mean: “It is a good thing that an unmarried man pursues the beloved, whereas an unmarried woman makes herself attractive to pursuit; that a husband protects the home, whereas a wife establishes it on the hearth; that a father represents the family and oversees it, whereas a mother conducts the family and manages it.”⁵⁵ He also describes the distinctive nobility and glory of both parents, likening the husband and father to “a king reigning over a commonwealth” or the chairman of the board, and the wife and mother to a queen and ruler of the house or CEO.⁵⁶ He notes that today such descriptions seem “naive, sentimental, and exaggerated,” but although he defends them stoutly, he does not provide a deep grounding in nature for seeing male and female orientations in this way. Can such a grounding be found? If we remember that biology and personhood are intimately connected, arguably it can be, precisely in the biological differences of the sexes as maternal and paternal.

A man’s role in procreation is simple and brief, at least until the child is born. Procreation also takes place outside his body. Intercourse

⁵³ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 59.

⁵⁴ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 59.

⁵⁵ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 60.

⁵⁶ Budziszewski, *Meaning of Sex*, 60-61.

involves his body, but remains external to it as he penetrates the woman. The biological function of his sexual organs is ejaculation, to propel his gametes out of his body and into the woman's. Once this is achieved, his role is accomplished. In contrast, intercourse takes place within the woman's body as she enfolds her lover. Her gametes remain internal to her, and conception takes place within her body. The fertilized ovum is then implanted, again within her body. Her involvement is lengthy and physically demanding as her body provides a home for the new life being formed. She experiences many bodily changes, including drastic alterations in hormone levels, nutritional needs, and bodily shape. After nine months she undergoes the painful, arduous, possibly dangerous, and certainly damaging process of childbirth, the commencement and duration of which is out of her control. All this happens not externally to her body but internally. Throughout gestation the child's relationship with its mother is extremely intimate; he or she depends on her for everything. In contrast, the father's relationship to his child is physically removed, mediated through the mother's body. Once the child is born, he or she remains independent of his or her father's body, but although he or she is no longer inside his or her mother, he or she still depends on her body for nourishment, from milk that is produced once again inside her body, leading to more changes in hormones and body shape and another lengthy and demanding commitment.

Of course, a good father will recognize that the burden placed upon the mother through her body is matched by the burden placed on him to protect and provide for his wife and child. Nevertheless, everything about fatherhood and motherhood, from intercourse through conception and implantation, the growth of the child leading to its birth and even its early nurture, points to the externally-oriented relations of men precisely as paternal relations, and the internally-oriented relations of women precisely as maternal relations. It seems likely, therefore, that these relations should and will take on wider forms as an expression of the structural differences between the sexes, with men as initiators, builders, and protectors of family, society, and nation, and women as formers and nurturers of community. Imagining the family, society, and nation as a house, men are the builders and guardians, while women take the shell that is constructed and turn it into a home, a place for a community to live together harmoniously. He offers strength and protection; she brings beauty and rest.⁵⁷

Thus far we have considered an exploration of what the natural order teaches those who awake to its beauty and coherence. But given our always partial grasp of created reality and sin's deceitfulness, it is worth checking our findings from nature against Scripture. Recently, James Brownson has argued that the account in Genesis 2 of humanity's creation is concerned

⁵⁷ Cf. Roy F. Baumeister, *Is There Anything Good About Men? How Cultures Flourish by Exploiting Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

with the sameness of the sexes, not their difference.⁵⁸ If true, this would seem to undercut my argument. But is it true?

Brownson claims that this focus on sameness rather than difference “arises from a simple reading of the narrative of Genesis 2:18–24”⁵⁹ and that, except for the description of the woman as a helper *k'negdo* (“corresponding to”) the man, the notion of difference “remains undeveloped” in the rest of the passage.⁶⁰ Brownson is right that Adam and Eve’s sameness is in view over against their difference from the animals and the rest of creation. He is also right to observe that “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” points to shared kinship (cf. Gen. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:12–13; 1 Chron. 11:1).⁶¹ However, his claim that “The primary movement of the text is not from unity to differentiation, but from the isolation of an individual to the deep blessing of shared kinship and community”⁶² overlooks many details in the text that point to profound *differences* between the first pair. Space forbids an exhaustive reading of the text and precludes drawing out all the implications of these differences for a fully developed Biblical anthropology. Given the argument of this paper, I will focus on the bodily differences evident in the narrative. Even here I am not aiming to be exhaustive; only a few observations are needed to establish that the difference between male and female is in the foreground of the narrative.

- (1) The man and woman are different in the order of their creation. The man is formed first, and Paul’s reference to it in 1 Timothy 2:13 shows that this is not irrelevant. Its importance is seen within the narrative of Genesis 2, as the man’s aloneness becomes the motivation first for God to bring the animals for him to name, and then to create the woman.
- (2) They are different in the manner of their creation. Several differences may be noted. The man was “formed” (Heb. *yatsar*; v. 7), whereas the woman was *built* (*banah*; v. 22). He was formed from the ground, hence his name “Adam” (*’adam*, which relates to the word for ground, *’adamah*; v. 7); she was built from his rib, hence, as explicitly stated in the text, her name “Woman” (*’ishbah*, which relates to the more specific word for man in the sense of male, *’ish*; v. 21 and following). Significantly, the man’s creation is a two-stage process: his body was formed from the dust of the ground, and then Yahweh God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. He was formed from something without life and received the breath of life after being formed. In contrast, the woman’s creation is a single act; built from the rib of a living being, she came forth as a living being. This

⁵⁸ James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), 29–30.

⁵⁹ Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 29.

⁶⁰ Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 30, n. 27.

⁶¹ Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 30.

⁶² Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 30.

difference in the manner of creation is significant within the narrative context, given the attention paid to the ground and what came from it: out of the ground Yahweh God formed the man (v. 7); out of the ground trees sprang up (v. 9); out of the ground Yahweh God formed (*yatsar* again) the beasts and birds (v. 19). This does not mean that the man is more akin to the trees and beasts than to the woman—they are one bone and flesh—but it highlights the uniqueness of her creation and leads to a third observation.

- (3) They are different in the location of their creation. The man's life began outside the garden of Eden; he was created before the garden was planted (vv. 7-8) and was then placed in the garden (v. 15). In contrast, the woman's life began inside the garden; the man was already there before she was built from his rib. Importantly, the man was created with the specific task of cultivating the garden. The need for a man to perform this task is flagged at the very opening of the narrative (v. 5); he received it before the woman was created (v. 15); and she was created precisely to help him with it (v. 18).
- (4) They are different in their relationship to the wider creation. Putting points (2) and (3) together, we can infer that the man's relationship to the ground and the garden is primary and more immediate. It is not that the woman has no relation to the ground or to their work, but her relationship is mediated through her husband, not least through his body. The man was to be the pioneer and architect in relation to place; the woman's role was to assist him. More picturesquely: in the tree of humanity he is the trunk, rooted in the ground to provide the foundation and make the tree strong; she is the fruit and foliage, which make the tree beautiful, whole, and useful. A similar difference is seen in relation to the other animals. We have seen that in contrast to the woman, the creation of the man resembles that of the animals (they are all formed from the ground). This difference in relation is also in the foreground in the story of the woman's creation (vv. 18-25). The animals were brought to the man, not to the woman (she was not yet created), and he named them. Then, strikingly, the woman was also brought to the man, and he named her. This does not put the woman at, or closer to, the level of the other animals, any more than the man is by being formed like them. But again it implies that the man's dominion over the animals is more immediate; her relationship to them is in some ways mediated through him (at least in the knowledge of their names). The more direct relationship of the man to the wider world is confirmed in the curses of Genesis 3. It is as Yahweh God addresses the man (*'adam*) that the ground (*'adamah*) and its cultivation is cursed because of or with respect to (*ba'avur*) him. The curse

of returning to the ground from which he was taken is also pronounced on him (3:17-19).

- (5) They are different in their relationship to their offspring. The significance of children is apparent in the wider narrative context. In Genesis 1, God blesses the original pair in being fruitful and multiplying (Gen. 1:28), which forms part of the context for God's declaration that it is not good for the man to be alone (2:18): he needs a helper, specifically a female helper, for fruitfulness and multiplication to be possible. Procreation is part of the original creation plan, although the first conceptions and births are recorded after the Fall (4:1-2). The man initiates in this: he is the subject of the verb in the first clause of 4:1: "Adam knew his wife." At the head of the first genealogy, the focus is on the man fathering a son and on the son bearing his likeness (5:3). But despite this, in Genesis 3-4 the focus in relation to children is more obviously on the woman. "She conceived and bore Cain," and she pronounced, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (4:1). This fits well with her second name, by which she is most commonly known (3:20). As before, the name is significant because of what the text relates it to: "The man called his wife's name Eve [*chavah*], because she was the mother of all living [*chayah*]." Thus her very name proclaims her relationship to children and life. Just prior to this, in a way that parallels the curse on Adam, the importance of her role in relation to children had also been brought out when Yahweh God pronounced his curse on the serpent and on her. The first part of the woman's curse is multiplication of pain and danger in childbearing (3:16); just as the man was cursed in relation to his primary role, so too the woman. But the curse on the serpent brought a word of promise: the woman's seed will one day crush the serpent's head (3:15).

The theme of seed is a major thread running through Genesis, not least in the Abraham narrative. But whereas there the focus is on Abraham's seed, here the promise is not that the *man's* seed will crush the serpent's head, but that the *woman's* seed will do it. Therefore, just as we drew inferences concerning the man and the woman's relationship to the ground and the wider creation, so it seems that we can draw a parallel conclusion regarding their relationship to offspring. Both are involved and both are necessary for the blessing of fruitfulness and the promise of the seed to be accomplished.⁶³ Yet throughout the narrative the

⁶³ Obviously this latter point needs some nuancing, and the ultimate fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 in the virginal conception of Christ, who conquered Satan in his death and resurrection, adds extra depth to the reason why it was to be specifically the woman's seed who was to crush the serpent's head. Nevertheless, throughout the history recorded in the Old Testament, both mothers and fathers are required (with both at the front of the stage at different points in the story), and we must in any case read the promise as first of all a promise to Eve herself, not just to her distant daughter, Mary.

woman is the focus of these promises in her absence (2:18), her promise (3:15), her curse (3:16), her name (3:20), and her claim (4:1). The man's relationship to the ground—and to origins, as the one created first—is more direct, and the woman's relationship to these things is mediated through him. Her relationship to offspring, and therefore to the future, including the eschatological future of the promised Seed, is more direct, and his relationship to children and the future is mediated through her, and particularly through her body with its capacity to bear and nurture children. There is some ambiguity in the name “Mother-of-All-Living” when we see what the man she brings forth does and what happens to the second man she bears (4:1-16). But, in the context of the promised seed, it is a name of great dignity and hope.

III. CONCLUSION

Reality is real.⁶⁴ Through careful scrutiny, particularly when our vision is brought into focus through the lens of Scripture, we can see that the creation reveals the meaning of our male and female humanity. As we rub our eyes and wake to this reality, we are freed to discover our true selves in the dignity and beauty of God's image as it has been from the beginning. For all our similarities, men and women are inherently different in the sexuate form of our male and female bodies that blossom into our gender as masculine and feminine. The differences find their locus in the paternal meaning of male bodies and personhood and the maternal meaning of female, but these root differences will then bear fruit in many ways. Despite cultural scepticism on this point, a recovery of confidence that our sexually dimorphic bodies are rich with meaning is vital if we are to inhabit the bodies our Creator has given us in obedient, whole, and thankful ways. It is also vital in seeking to raise a new generation of healthy and whole disciples of Christ. Moreover, as we learn to read the meaning that God has inscribed on our bodies and to live in its light, the church will have much to offer a sexually confused world that seems intent on fleeing from the solid ground of reality into a land of swamps and shadows.

⁶⁴ On this, see the highly entertaining essay by Lilly Cherney, “Are Women Real?” in *The Calvinist International*, September 2015; <<https://calvinistinternational.com/2015/09/16/are-women-real-comprehensive-complementarianism/>> [last accessed May 19, 2016].

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FAITH, SCIENCE, AND ECCLESIAL CULTURE ENGAGING STEM PROFESSIONALS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

BENJAMIN D. ESPINOZA¹

During my time as a pastor, I was regularly involved in conversations of a scientific nature. In my congregation there were a number of scientists—chemists, computer scientists, engineers, and even a physicist. I made it a priority to have regular meetings with these people, as I believed they possessed incredible insight into how God created the universe that I could only imagine. Though I was their pastor, I learned as much from them about science as they did about the Scriptures from me. I often wondered, however, if my church (and others in the evangelical fold) did enough to engage this group of people. I also wondered if our lack of engagement or appreciation for the nature of scientific work was a primary reason some avoid the church, leave the church, or depart from the faith entirely.

Those who have chosen STEM professions (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are often driven to understand how the universe functions. While most STEM professionals do not adhere to any particular religion due to the seeming contradiction between scientific facts and the claims of major religions, a sizable minority practice their discipline with excellence while maintaining their religious faith. Pastors, the heralds of the gospel and shepherds of the local church, bear the unique responsibility of leading such people into a deeper understanding of God's Word and the task of faithfully embodying the gospel to a lost and broken creation.

Ministering to congregants in the STEM professions is generally not a topic addressed in a typical seminary curriculum. But pastors who desire to shepherd the flock of God and enmesh themselves in the lives of their congregants must understand and wrestle with what it means to minister to and with congregants who have chosen STEM professions as their vocational work. Few have tackled the issue of what ministering to and with Christians in the STEM professions looks like in a congregational context. As we will see, there have been many studies outlining the religious beliefs of scientists in the academy and in the popular sphere at large; however, few have taken this sociological research and crafted a fresh approach to pastoral ministry with STEM professionals that incorporates the insights of these findings.

¹ Ben Espinoza is a Research Assistant at Michigan State University and Adjunct Professor at Great Lakes Christian College.

In this article I develop pastoral approaches for ministering to people in our churches working in STEM professions. First, I will trace a brief history of the relationship between science and religion with a focus on how the church has encouraged the scientific vocation in the past. Next I will explore research on the religiosity of scientists in the academy and in the workforce. Then I will examine the insights of Guy Consolmagno into how the technically-minded understand religion in light of their vocation as scientists. Finally I will provide several proposals for ministering to congregants in scientific fields based on theological and social realities.

I. EXPLORING CREATION: THE CHURCH'S GREAT LEGACY AND THE EXAMPLE OF ROBERT BOYLE

The Bible continually celebrates God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Hebrews 11:3 affirms, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."² In doxological fashion Revelation 4:11 notes, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." And the psalmist exclaims in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." References in the books of Job, Isaiah, and the Psalms revel in the beauty, complexity, and majesty of God's creation—the vast mountains, the endless skies, the human body, and the creatures of the sea. The Bible consistently recognizes God as the Creator of the universe, known and unknown.

The first line of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," recalls to mind the first two chapters of Genesis, which invite the church to ponder the mystery of God's relationship to his creation and the role we play within the created order. To the rich, poetic narrative of Genesis 1-2 the humble churchman will exclaim, "Amen," while the inquiring philosopher or theologian will inquire, "Why?" However, to the scientist, the first two chapters of Genesis raise the question, "How?" Since the church believes that Christ was intimately involved in the act of creation and is currently involved in its sustaining, redemption, and restoration, then every effort to explore how the created order functions will confirm God's handiwork and majesty in creation. The function and order of creation leads to a posture of worship unto the One whose mind imagined the universe before its existence. To explore the created order is to explore the mind of God himself. As Duane Litfin puts it, "*Everything* we discover—whether about chemical compounds, or our own DNA, or the human mind, or the universe itself—is an insight into the mind of Christ."³

Contrary to popular opinion, scientific inquiry flourished in the Middle Ages.⁴ Up until the nineteenth century, the church actively supported the

² All Biblical references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

³ Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004): 162.

⁴ James Hannam, *God's Philosophers* (London: Icon Books, 2009).

pursuit of understanding how God created the heavens and the earth, as well as how he designed the creation to function and flourish. Religion and scientific exploration served complementary purposes. For centuries the church commissioned scientists to investigate the mysteries of the universe so that they could shed light on the grandeur of God's created order.⁵ From the Middle Ages into the Renaissance period, theology served as the "queen of the sciences," wherein it was the disciplinary lens by which to interpret other disciplines. As a result, scientists possessed a deep reservoir of theological and philosophical knowledge that enabled them to interpret empirical findings and situate such findings into a cohesive framework. This deep well of knowledge enabled scientists to even compose works of rigorous theology. One such thinker was Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141), who firmly believed that nature was a handbook written by the living God. For Hugh, every scientific discovery testified to God's handiwork in creation and strengthened the witness of Scripture.⁶ Apart from his own contributions to science, Hugh also penned works of theology and exegesis, including *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* and *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, among others.⁷

Another thinker along this vein was Thomas Bradwardine (1300-1349), also known as *Doctor Profundus* ("profound doctor"). Bradwardine was the epitome of the "renaissance man," having contributed to conversations in science, physics, mathematics, and theology. His work *Tractatus de Proportionibus Velocitatum in Motibus* ("Discussion on the Ratios of Speeds in Motion") tested time-honored theories of celestial motion and called into question the notion of atoms, though we now know that his theory was wrong.⁸ Alongside his strong contribution to the sciences, Bradwardine was a capable theologian. Ascending to the rank of Archbishop of Canterbury, Bradwardine is often considered a forerunner of the Reformation as he celebrated the theology of grace and championed the supremacy of Scripture.

Perhaps the best example of a Christian scientist who readily engaged in matters related to science and theology during this time was Robert Boyle (1627-1691), often considered the father of modern chemistry. Boyle's achievements include the articulation of "Boyle's Law" relating

⁵ For a broad scope of the history of science and religion, *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Gary Ferngren (New York & London: Routledge, 2000) remains a major resource on the issue. While the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) has been a long-term patron of scientific endeavors, there were moments in its history when church leaders were at odds with scientists. For more information on this, consult Don O'Leary's monumental work *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007).

⁶ Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Theology of Hugh of St. Victor: An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Paul Rorem, *Hugh of Saint Victor* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Franklin Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St. Victor* (Begijnhof, Belgium: Brepols, 2009).

⁸ Dan Graves, "Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1290-1349): Student of Motion," in *Scientists of Faith: Forty-eight Biographies of Historic Scientists and Their Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996): 29-32.

to the volume of gas, the formalization of the scientific method, and the popularization of science. He authored a plethora of books that advanced new developments in science and was known as one of the leading scientists of his day. Boyle was also a devout Christian: he learned ancient languages in order to read the Bible in its original form, donated large sums of his income to help impoverished farmers, began each day with prayer, and supported Bible translations that could bring the gospel to unreached people groups. Boyle firmly believed that Christianity and science were compatible and that science testified to God's handiwork in creation. He writes,

When with bold telescopes I survey the old and newly discovered stars and planets, when with excellent microscopes I discern the unimitable subtlety of nature's curious workmanship; and when, in a word, by the help of anatomical knives, and the light of chymical furnaces, I study the book of nature I find myself oftentimes reduced to exclaim with the Psalmist, How manifold are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all!⁹

Elsewhere, in an essay entitled "The Excellency of Theology, Compared with Natural Philosophy," Boyle exclaims, "The vastness, beauty, orderliness of heavenly bodies; the excellent structure of animals and plants; and other phenomena of nature justly induce an intelligent, unprejudiced observer to conclude a supreme, powerful, just, and good author."¹⁰

Boyle believed that science served as a means to worship the Creator and gaze into his mind and attributes. One of the last books he wrote was *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690), in which Boyle explored the relationship between science and religion and detailed his life as a Christian scientist. He believed that nature served as the temple of God and that the scientist was its priest. Boyle described his understanding of God to be that of a "clockmaker" who creates the world and then leaves it alone, a view championed by the deists of the nineteenth century. Davis concludes, "The Christian virtuoso, said Boyle, was to be known for personal honour and trustworthiness; devotion to one's work as a divinely ordained vocation, even a religious duty; and reliance on the testimony of nature, not human opinion."¹¹

Despite a deistic understanding of God's relationship to creation, Boyle proved himself a capable theologian. He authored numerous works of a theological nature, some of which were not related to his vocation as a scientist. In *Of the high Veneration Man's Intellect owes to God, peculiar for his Wisdom and Power* (1684), Boyle argues that the mind of God is superior to the mind of humans, considering the fact that God is the creator of even the most intelligent humans. Other works, such as *Some Considerations touching the Style of the Holy Scriptures* (1661) and *Discourse*

⁹ Robert Boyle, *Seraphic Love*, 1660.

¹⁰ Robert Boyle, "The Excellency of Theology, Compared with Natural Philosophy," 1665.

¹¹ Edward Davis, "Robert Boyle's Religious Life, Attitudes, and Vocation," *Science and Christian Belief* 19 (2007): 137.

Of Things Above Reason, Inquiring Whether a Philosopher Should Admit there are Any Such (1681) examine Biblical genres and philosophical approaches to reason. Boyle's status as a theologian *par excellence* garnered him an invitation to serve as a bishop in the Church of England. Boyle declined the offer, as he believed that his primary calling was as a scientist. In his will Boyle endowed a series of lectures on science and religion called the Boyle Lectures. The specific aim of such lectures was to promote the Christian faith over against other religions and challenges to the Christian faith from science. The lectures were held every few years from 1692 until 1965 and were revived in 2004.¹²

II. SURVEYING THE CURRENT TERRAIN

Since the modern period, there has been consistent friction between science and religion. Owen Gingerich writes that "The relationship between the arena of science and the religious domain has been tense going back to the time of Galileo and beyond, but it has been particularly fraught in twentieth-century America, with issues relating to the age of the cosmos and the rise of life on earth."¹³ The late Harvard scientist Stephen Jay Gould believed that science and religion occupied two separate "magisteria," wherein the two, possessing their own language, structures, and goals, should not interact with one another (he labeled this "non-overlapping magisteria" or "NOMA").¹⁴ However, as Gingerich has pointed out, science and religion have been in conversation since their origins as disciplines in the academy.¹⁵ A litany of science and religion textbooks have lent credence to Gingerich's claim and encouraged dialogue between the two disciplines, particularly on the part of evangelicals related to the age of the earth and evolutionary theory.¹⁶

Still, there exists a strong tension between the two fields, as many either find themselves caught between their religious beliefs and their devotion to the scientific process or have given up on the hope of reconciliation between science and faith. While scientists are generally perceived by the public as having a strongly antireligious bias, recent statistics and research indicates otherwise. In order to cut through the cacophony of disruptive

¹² The lectures are currently held at St Mary-le-Bow Church in Cheapside, London, UK. Recent speakers include Alister McGrath, Sarah Coakley, and Robert J. Russell.

¹³ Owen Gingerich, *God's Planet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014): 3.

¹⁴ Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999). His proposal has met with criticism from religious scholars. New Atheists such as Richard Dawkins have also vigorously critiqued him. For his critique on the matter, see Dawkins's "When Religion Steps on Science's Turf," *Free Inquiry* 18(2).

¹⁵ Gingerich, *God's Planet*. In order to demonstrate that science and religion have always enjoyed a tangled relationship, Gingerich explores the circumstances regarding the work of Copernicus, Darwin, and Hoyle.

¹⁶ Ian Barbour in *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners* (San Francisco: Harper, 2000) points out that "the average number of books published per year shown under the Library of Congress subject heading 'Religion and Science,' tripled from 71 during the 1950's to 211 in the 1990's" (p. 1). While his statistic is obviously dated, a multitude of books on science and religion continue to be published at a high rate.

voices that seek to separate science from religion,¹⁷ sociologist Elaine Ecklund, as part of the Religion among American Scientists (RAAS) study, surveyed over 1,700 scientists in the academy and conducted interviews with 275 of them in order to grasp their thoughts on matters related to science and religion. Ecklund found that both the religious and scientific beliefs of scientists differed radically from that of the American public. This is especially evident in the fact that while only 9% of scientists surveyed were certain of God's existence, 63% of the American public possesses a sense of certainty about his existence.¹⁸ Regarding the actual religious affiliations of scientists, Ecklund discovered that 54% of scientists have no religious affiliation, compared to 16% of the American public. The next highest religious affiliation was Judaism, which comprises 16% of scientists and 9% of the public. Mainline Protestantism boasts 14% of scientists and approximately 13% of the American public. Seven percent of scientists identify as "other," a number that matches the public (6%). While black Protestants comprise 8% of the American population, 0% of scientists identified as such. In these statistics alone we see the sharp religious divide between scientists and the public at large.

But perhaps the most shocking statistic Ecklund notes is the status of evangelical scientists in the academy. While 28% of the American population identifies as evangelical, only 2% of scientists in the academy claim the affiliation. In other words, while evangelicals can claim the highest number of religious devotees in the United States, they are a minority within the scientific community. Even more depressing, however, are Ecklund's findings regarding evangelical self-identification:

It is obvious that there is a much smaller proportion of evangelicals among scientists . . . compared to the proportion of evangelicals in the general population. Yet when I interviewed scientists, I also found a considerable reluctance in using the term evangelical as a self-descriptor, especially when we compare its use in the general population. Even when scientists fit the traditional description of an evangelical, they do not want to embrace the term for themselves. More important for them than labels were beliefs and practices.¹⁹

What do we make of this? The research implies that scientists with evangelical beliefs tend to shy away from identifying as evangelical for fear that such a label would diminish their reputation and therefore negatively color other scientists' perception of their scientific research. Interestingly, Ecklund notes that none of the religious scientists she interviewed held to intelligent design theory. Ninety-four percent of the scientists she

¹⁷ Ecklund cites Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* as an example of perpetuating the narrative that science and religion are incapable of intellectual or practical coexistence, which for Ecklund is false. In her study Ecklund found that many of the scientists she interviewed believed that Dawkins was doing little or nothing to advance the cause of science in the public sphere (*Science vs. Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 : 16).

¹⁸ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 16.

¹⁹ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 34.

interviewed believed that evolution provides the best explanation of how life developed on earth.²⁰ In a sense, evangelical scientists, despite possessing evangelical theological beliefs, still deviate from their brothers and sisters in the general population on this major issue.

As one can imagine, religiosity among scientists in the workplace differs sharply from that of the general public. While 83% of the general public profess a belief in God, only 33% of scientists do so. In addition, 12% of the general public believe in a “universal power,” while 18% of scientists do so. While only 4% of the general public don’t believe in either God or a higher power, 41% of scientists surveyed do not believe in either. As we can see, the differences are rather disparate. However, when we zero in on the difference between the general public and scientists in terms of religious affiliations or labels, the difference becomes more drastic. The largest population of the general public identifies as Evangelical Protestant (28%), while only 4% of scientists adopt the label.²¹ The gap shrinks when one analyzes the gaps between Catholics and mainline Protestants. While we can make a number of assumptions regarding religious self-identification between the general public and scientists, such interpretations are outside the purview of this paper.

However, despite occupying a minority share of the scientific community, some evangelicals have become thought leaders in their discipline. In 2009 President Barack Obama appointed Francis Collins, an evangelical, as the director of the National Institutes of Health. Collins, former director of the Human Genome Project and author of the best-selling *The Language of God*,²² is outspoken about his evangelical convictions, as they shape his approach to science and worldview. His appointment as director of the NIH was met with sincere praise from many in the scientific community. Ecklund labels Collins as among the few who are “boundary pioneers”—those scientists who have successfully “reconciled” their discipline with religion.²³ The ability to reconcile the two is viewed positively by the scientific community, despite the low levels of religiosity some of their colleagues espouse. Regarding an evangelical like Collins, Ecklund found that no scientist she interviewed had anything negative to say about him. She concludes that this is most likely because Collins is a scientist of the highest caliber and therefore commands the respect of those in his professional community. She writes, “Collins’ respected scientific identity ushers in acceptance of his religious identity. Even his public endorsement of religion is received well by scientists because of his legitimacy within science.”²⁴ By contrast, however, Ecklund writes that scientists “would not have *nearly* as much respect for

²⁰ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 30.

²¹ David Masci, “Scientists and Belief,” Pew Research Center’s Religion Public Life Project RSS, 2009 <<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief/>> [accessed September 15, 2016].

²² Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Provides Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

²³ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 46.

²⁴ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 47.

a Christian pastor who spoke at their university about how science and religion might be compatible.”²⁵

The work of Ecklund and the Pew Research Center raises some salient points that enable us to understand the scientific community and how it relates to religion as a whole. First, Christians of all denominations are a religious minority in the scientific community. This fact implies that STEM disciplines are a breeding ground for agnosticism and atheism. However, Ecklund, in another study, found that atheists and agnostics simply tend to gravitate toward these disciplines.²⁶ Unfortunately, Christians who enter into the discipline have a better chance of rejecting religious beliefs throughout their careers.²⁷ Second, the “minority within a minority” status of evangelicals within the scientific community indicates that the church has a unique role to play in shepherding Christians whom God has gifted to embrace a life of science. While STEM professions may not be rife with believers, Christians in scientific fields have a unique opportunity to share the gospel with their colleagues in everyday settings. Finally, Francis Collins serves as an example that evangelicals can transcend whatever religious biases there are in scientific professions and become “boundary pioneers” who demonstrate the ability to conduct serious scientific research while maintaining a robust religious life. Ecklund’s thorough work provides us with insight on how to minister to congregants in STEM disciplines, as this paper will later demonstrate.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE TECHNICAL MIND: BROTHER CONSOLMAGNO ON HOW STEM PROFESSIONALS MAKE SENSE OF FAITH

But how do the technically-minded understand faith? While Ecklund and others shed needed light onto the religiosity of STEM professionals, Guy Consolmagno invites us to understand how technically-minded people (whom Consolmagno affectionately labels “techies”) in general make sense of religion and faith. Brother Consolmagno, a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), is an astronomer with the Vatican fortified

²⁵ Ecklund, *Science vs. Religion*, 47.

²⁶ Patricia Donovan, “Scientists May Not Be Very Religious, but Science May Not Be to Blame,” University at Buffalo <<http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2007/06/8732.html>> [accessed July 8, 2015].

²⁷ While this is only an implication of her research, Ecklund admits that there is some truth to it. She writes, “For instance, consider two sociologists who are male, in the 18–35 range, born in the United States, have no children and are currently married. One was raised in a Protestant denomination and religion was ‘very important’ while growing up. The other was raised as a religious ‘none’ and religion was ‘not at all important’ while growing up. Analyses of the RAAS survey reveals [sic] that the former has a predicted probability of 14 percent for saying that he does not believe in God. This compares to a 54 percent chance of the latter saying he does not believe, a striking difference. These differences do not offer conclusive evidence about the causes of disproportionate self-selection of scientists from certain religious backgrounds into the scientific disciplines. They do, however, offer potential for explaining the differences in religiosity between scientists and the general population” (See Ecklund, “Religion and Spirituality among University Scientists,” Social Science Research Council, 2007: 7).

with degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Arizona State University (ASU). He frequently writes on his exploits as an astronomer at the Vatican and explores some rather interesting issues of faith and science.²⁸ In *God's Mechanics: How Engineers and Scientists Make Sense of Religion*, Consolmagno explores how STEM professionals integrate religion into their understanding of science.²⁹ For Consolmagno, in order to talk theology with a STEM professional, one must first understand the particular attitudes and orientations of the technical mind—an endeavor that few pastors or religious educators have undertaken. Consolmagno writes,

Indeed, to people who don't understand the scientific or engineering mind-set, the questions a techie would ask and the techie manner of asking them can often sound threatening or dismissive, even though such questions are nothing of the sort. ...To the extent that there is still a rift between science and religion among my fellow scientists and engineers, it's because most religion teachers and writers are woefully inept at explaining religion in terms that make sense to a techie. Certainly, this is true of most of our Sunday school teachers!³⁰

Thus, those who seek to speak spiritual truth to the technically-minded must first understand how the technical mind works. For Consolmagno, the classic adage, “seek first to understand, then to be understood” rings true.

Consolmagno demonstrates that STEM professionals have a need for understanding truth that is grounded in factual reasoning. STEM professionals have little interest in participating in something that cannot be tested. For persons working in STEM fields, facts need to be proven. He writes,

First of all, we always recognize that we could be wrong. Logic can be flawed. . . . Next, we allow our beliefs to be tested by results. If we get an answer that works, it confirms our trust in the data, and it strengthens our perceptions the next time we're looking for a hunch. We want all our beliefs to be confirmed by our experience. And finally, we're a whole lot more comfortable with our results if there is more than one line of evidence leading to the same conclusion.³¹

For STEM professionals, it is important that these facts be verified by trustworthy resources. Science is a communal discipline that relies on the peer review of others to ensure quality, objectivity, and accurate

²⁸ Among his many works are *Brother Astronomer: Adventures of a Vatican Astronomer* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) and his most recent book, *Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial ... and Other Questions from the Astronomers' Inbox at the Vatican* (New York: Image, 2014).

²⁹ Guy Consolmagno, *God's Mechanics: How Engineers and Scientists Make Sense of Religion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

³⁰ Consolmagno, *God's Mechanics*, 3.

³¹ As he says, “It is illogical to assume that you're always smarter than everyone else (even if, alas, it's an all-too-common techie failing)” (*God's Mechanics*, 17).

interpretation. As Consolmagno points out, STEM professionals are more interested in discovering the correct answer than in stroking their own egos.³² This same dedication to the scientific method and subsequent verification by the scientific community can be applied to questions of faith. As Consolmagno writes, “The same techniques can be applied by a scientist or engineer to understanding what God is or at least what God might be. The techie credo is to keep an open mind but trust your common sense. Compare what you hear with what you’ve actually experienced of how the universe works.”³³ Thus, the STEM professional seeks truth in the form of rational facts and solutions that have been verified through the scientific method and supported by the broader scientific community at large.

STEM professionals tend to be pragmatists as well; the theoretical needs to be tangible and functional. Speaking of the idea of religion, Consolmagno writes, “But a techie might well ask, is there any evidence that this God, should it exist, wants any interaction with the created universe, with inhabitants of Earth, or with me in particular? ... Is there something I’m supposed to be doing here?”³⁴ Religion for the STEM professional must be responsive because that is what *makes sense*. If God is the creator of the universe, then he must be expecting some response from his creation.

And even if there is something I should be doing, why should I need religion to do it? Why do I need to involve anyone or anything else in order to be in a relationship with the transcendent? . . . What is the function of an organized religion? And how well do the ones out there perform that function?³⁵

For the STEM professional, religion should serve a functional purpose. If it does not, it is not worth pursuing, nor is it worth engaging on any serious intellectual level. In theological terms, to the STEM professional, if God “doesn’t want to engage with us, our reasons for believing in him are useless.”³⁶ In other words, if God is a “clockmaker” who created a universe that governs itself while he removes himself from involvement in his creation, then any attempt to reach out to him is futile, as he has not made an attempt to reach out to us. He may be a “Creator,” but he would be far from being a “Father.”

Consolmagno summarizes the purpose of religion for the STEM professional (in general) by noting that its purposes are “to record and systematize our collective experience of the transcendent; to help us recognize and make sense of it; and to give us something we can do to participate in it while avoiding its dangers.”³⁷ This approach to understanding religion is certainly rooted in the need for the rigid structure

³² Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 17.

³³ Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 17.

³⁴ Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 47.

³⁵ Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 47.

³⁶ Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 49.

³⁷ Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, 51.

and order that often characterizes the technically-minded. The natural implication of this religious approach is the tendency for the technically-minded to understand religion as inherently *legalistic*, reducing religion to a set of rules and regulations to embrace. Consolmagno writes,

Given [STEM professionals'] "how does it work?" functional mindset, what a religion is can become equated with what a religion does. And if the only thing we see religion doing is presenting a set of rules and regulations, a technically oriented person might think that the sum total of belonging to a religion is learning the rules and following them.³⁸

The logical outflow of this tendency then is the belief that salvation can be attained simply by following the rules and regulations set forth by a religion. Failing or succeeding in living up to the standards of a religion leads to either judgment of others or judgment of oneself. Both are wrong and operate under the false assumption that religion automatically entails legalism. In ministering to and with STEM professionals, we must take every opportunity to say that the Christian faith means embodying the gospel of Jesus Christ through many rich avenues, and not simply through rule-following. For Consolmagno personally, science provides him an avenue to understand God's creation and, as a result, grow closer to God himself.

In creation, I see a Creator who loves to produce amazing complexity from the interplay of a few simple rules. . . . And I see a creator who puts a high value on elegance and beauty. There have been, I'd guess, a hundred thousand images returned by the Hubble space telescope; I don't know a single one that's ugly.³⁹

To summarize, according to Consolmagno, STEM professionals are fact-driven pragmatists who desire a religion that makes sense of the world and everything in it, and that requires an embodied response. While the tendency of some STEM professionals would be to view religion as an antiquated exercise in seeking to answer the questions that science has already solved, religion can play an important role in the lives of the technically-minded.

IV. PASTORAL MINISTRY WITH CONGREGANTS IN STEM PROFESSIONS: BUILDING A SCIENCE-FRIENDLY ECCLESIAL CULTURE

Thus far we have explored the church's great legacy of supporting those who seek to understand God's creation through science. Recent surveys and the work of Guy Consolmagno have provided us with significant insight into the social status of scientists who are Christians, as well as how technically-minded people understand the Christian faith. With this context in mind, we now move to constructing practices and

³⁸ Consolmagno, *God's Mechanics*, 73.

³⁹ Consolmagno, *God's Mechanics*, 170.

approaches that pastors can explore in order to minister effectively to and with congregants working in STEM professions.

Pastors are the primary shapers of an ecclesial culture. Their priorities, passions, and vision often dictate the shape of the congregational culture. If pastors are to minister well with STEM professionals, the dominant ecclesial culture must be one that welcomes questions related to how science and theology interact and engage with one another. This is not because science is an inherently good endeavor, but because it leads the technically-minded to understand God and share their understanding with others. Duane Litfin writes, "As Christians, we do our chemistry with a deep reverence for what we study, not merely because it is fascinating and important in its own right, which it is, but because it is the craftwork of our Savior and Master."⁴⁰ Conversations that perpetuate the cultural gap between science and religion should have no place within the church, for the same one who raised Christ from the dead is the one who created the heavens and the earth and desires for his people to know him better in every way. For centuries this is how the church understood the scientific task.

How can we birth an ecclesial culture supportive of science-related questions and those working in STEM fields? Deborah Haarsma, who served as co-director of The Ministry Theorem, a project at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, from 2008 to 2012, posits four primary practices that pastors and ministry leaders should engage in to foster a science-friendly congregation. First, pastors should inform their congregation that there is more than one Christian perspective on the origins of life. Second, pastors need to explain that evolution is not the only scientific issue that the church should be exploring. Other issues such as climate change, bioethics, and appropriate use of technology should be considered in theological perspective.⁴¹ Third, "It is essential to balance such conversations [about evolution and science] with positive responses to God's creation," such as singing hymns about creation and referring to scientific developments in sermons and lessons.⁴² Finally, we must remember that a love of science is more "caught than taught." Thus, pastors and ministry leaders should be encouraging young people to pursue scientific vocations.

⁴⁰ Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College*, 160.

⁴¹ "The created order comes from the gracious hands of God; it is good, but participates in different ways in the structures of fallenness. As God's project, it is upheld and directed by him while those made in his image are placed in such a relationship to the world that they are called to play some part in its perfecting. What constitutes the proper perfecting of any particular created being is not clear, and subject to much argument" (Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]: 229). Congregations can and should wrestle with how they should relate to the created order and participate in its "perfecting." STEM professionals can serve as guides in these endeavors.

⁴² Deborah Haarsma, "Engaging Science in the Life of Your Congregation," BioLogos Forum <<http://biologos.org/blog/engaging-science-in-the-life-of-your-congregation>> [accessed July 1, 2015].

Several congregations in the United States and abroad exemplify a science-friendly ecclesial culture. In 2011 the John Templeton Foundation funded Scientists in Congregations, an initiative aimed at fostering the dialogue between science and theology in thirty-five local churches in the United States, Canada, and France. These congregations have creatively formed ecclesial cultures that catalyze the dialogue between science and Christianity in ways unique to their cultural locations. For instance, not only did First Presbyterian Church of Boulder, Colorado seek to build relationships among STEM professionals in their congregation, they also built inroads among STEM professionals in the Boulder community through adult education initiatives, conferences, and luncheons. Another congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota, implemented curricula designed to educate all of their members, kindergarten through adults, in matters of science and Christianity.⁴³ These congregations serve as exemplars to other congregations desiring to form an ecclesial culture that regularly dialogues on matters related to science and faith.

Speaking of his experiences in the Scientists in Congregations project, Greg Cootsona, a pastor in Chico, California, writes of an encounter he had with a graduate student in the sciences:

Among the enthusiastic attendees was a member of our church and graduate student at the University of California at Davis—which is about 100 miles from our church in Chico—who drove to the conference in order to hear how faith and science relate. She came bounding up at the end of one talk, saying: “This is great stuff, and these are issues I’m wrestling with. Why don’t you bring more of that material into the pulpit?” As I walked off, I wondered to myself, “Why don’t I? Why have I resisted bringing these insights into my ministry as a pastor?”

I realized that the two responses I once would have given no longer applied. I wasn’t always sure I had the right answers, and I was afraid most people wouldn’t be interested in hearing them. Now I know that the interest is there—inside and outside the church. And we don’t have to have perfectly produced solutions—we just have to start the conversation. A whole lot of “nones” are waiting.⁴⁴

While the prospect of delving into the thorny debate between science and religion can be daunting for some pastors, the evangelistic and missional opportunities abound. While in our colleges and seminaries we describe the sociocultural shift from modernity to postmodernity and how it has impacted our churches, we forget that the primary voices of New

⁴³ “Model Churches,” Scientists in Congregations <<http://www.scientistsincongregations.org/model-churches/>> [accessed July 7, 2015].

⁴⁴ Greg Cootsona, “When Science comes to Church” Christianity Today Online <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/march-web-only/when-science-comes-to-church.html>> [accessed July 8, 2015].

Atheism (Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchens) are essentially modernists who see little reasonable evidences for theistic belief. As modernistic tendencies abound, pastors must be able to engage non-Christian STEM professionals on their own terms. As Haarsma writes, “Minor technical errors made in good faith are forgivable, but a sermon that argues that mainstream science is wrong on some point can be devastating,” especially to students interested in pursuing careers in the sciences.⁴⁵

A. INTELLECTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT

A primary ministry to congregants in STEM professions is the ministry of intellectual encouragement. As mentioned previously, evangelicals comprise only 2% of the academic science guild, and it can be assumed that evangelicals working in scientific fields are also a religious minority. It can be assumed as well there are low levels of religiosity among other STEM professions, such as engineering or mathematics. Therefore, the need to encourage STEM professionals in their work becomes all more apparent to the pastor. Historian Michael Hamilton perceives that Christians engaging in STEM disciplines rarely receive encouragement in their pursuits. While this could be attributed to the perception that the goal of rigorous scientific research directly challenges Christianity, a primary reason is most likely a lack of appreciation for how God’s creation functions and how scientific pursuits can be an act of worship. Grounding the need for intellectual encouragement in the sovereignty of God, Hamilton writes,

We need to encourage Christians to study things that have no apparent connection to Christianity. We need to give them Christian reasons for studying the chemical processes of algae growth, or methodology of interpreting Babylonian pottery shards, or hunter-gatherer kinship patterns. Why? Because it just may be that God has called them to the task, for reasons only he knows, and for outcomes only he can foresee.⁴⁶

It is the task of evangelical scientists and engineers to explore the contours of God’s creation and how it works. This is the way they steward their gifts, just as exegetes steward their linguistic skills when they interpret Scripture, or violinists perform Paganini solos to the glory of God. However, pastors bear the responsibility of encouraging those gifted in particular skills or disciplines to pursue vocations where they can exercise their gifts and talents regularly.

Because of their devotion to the scientific method, scientists often find their hypotheses proven wrong by experimentation. While this can be intellectually and vocationally discouraging, pastors can walk alongside the scientists in their congregation and extend a hand of encouragement.

⁴⁵ Haarsma, “Engaging Science in the Life of Your Congregation.”

⁴⁶ Michael Hamilton, “Reflection and Response: The Elusive Idea of Christian Scholarship,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 31, No. 1 (Fall 2001): 21.

Crouch writes, “Even great scientists have come up against the sheer oddity and unpredictability of the world—Albert Einstein, for example, never fully accepted the uncertainty at the heart of quantum mechanics, something that is now universally accepted by physicists.”⁴⁷ He goes on to suggest that “This regular confrontation with the limits of one’s own knowledge and skill is not to be taken for granted.”⁴⁸ Consistently demonstrating to a congregation that the scientific profession is one to be encouraged and explored will go a long way in shaping an ecclesial culture hospitable toward questions of science and religion. Not only will the STEM professionals in the congregation be encouraged, but so will students who may be pondering a career in the STEM disciplines.

B. INVOLVEMENT IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Another key way to minister to and with STEM professionals in the church is to involve them in the educational ministries of the church. STEM professionals are naturally oriented toward intellectual pursuits, and involving them in educational ministries enables them to participate in the life of the church through sharing and discussing topics they enjoy researching and studying. In a society that spreads toxicity between religion and science, STEM professionals in the church can become the “boundary pioneers” of their congregation as they are open about their ability to harmonize their religious devotion with their chosen vocation.

STEM professionals in the church can play a role in a congregation’s understanding of scientific issues and their relationship to the Christian faith. Since matters of science and religion often come to the fore when discussing public policy, such as the teaching of intelligent design in public schools or embryonic stem cell research, STEM professionals in the church can dispel myths that often surround these controversial topics and speak truth into the lives of congregants. Working alongside STEM professionals to develop curriculum related to apologetics and other faith-science issues can be a fruitful way of involving them in ecclesial life.

One of the previously mentioned Templeton-funded congregations, Berkeley Covenant Church, developed an adult education course entitled “Considering God’s Word: Exploring the Interface between the Christian Faith and the Natural Sciences,” cotaught by pastors and resident scientists.⁴⁹ The syllabus for the course notes:

With the help of the ever-attentive eyes of the natural sciences we will explore the majesty of the material reality that God has created

⁴⁷ Andy Crouch, “What I Wish My Pastor Knew about the Life of a Scientist,” *BioLogos Forum* <<http://biologos.org/blog/from-the-archives-what-i-wish-my-pastor-knew-about...the-life-of-a-scientist>> [last accessed July 7, 2015].

⁴⁸ Crouch, “What I Wish My Pastor Knew.”

⁴⁹ “Berkeley Covenant Church.” Scientists in Congregations <<http://www.scientistsincongregations.org/model-churches/berkeley-covenant-church/>> [last accessed July 7, 2015]. This was part of three phases of integration the church experienced in forming a science-friendly ecclesial culture.

and continues to create. Learning what science is and is not, we will discover how theological and scientific truths interrelate, and how specific areas of scientific knowledge interact with, challenge, and uphold key areas of Christian belief.⁵⁰

Courses such as this in the local church serve as an example to Christians young and old in their faith that the traditional dichotomies that society perpetuates are false and that to have a robust faith means to integrate faith with intellectual pursuits, especially STEM disciplines.

Involving STEM professionals in Christian education encourages young students oriented toward STEM disciplines to pursue those disciplines as they enter high school and college. David Kinnaman in his groundbreaking book *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church* found that young people perceive the church as being “antiscience.”⁵¹ He writes, “Because science has come to play such a defining role in our broader culture, it is shaping young adults’ perceptions of the church. It is these perceptions that we must deal well with if we truly desire to make disciples.”⁵² He points out that 35% of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds believe that Christians are too confident that they know “all the answers” regarding faith and science, and 29% of those surveyed in this group believe that churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in.⁵³ Perhaps even more discouraging is that while 52% of those surveyed hope to pursue a STEM profession, only 1% of youth pastors had addressed issues of faith and science in the prior year.⁵⁴

While youth in the United States report some of the highest rates of religiosity in the world,⁵⁵ youth workers nonetheless struggle to engage them in issues of faith and science. Andrew Root and Erik Leafblad, with a grant from the Templeton Foundation, found that approximately one-third (32%) of youth pastors never teach on scientific issues, while only 13% teach about science at least quarterly.⁵⁶ However, these youth workers have at least one conversation related to faith and science with a student each month.⁵⁷ Eighty-two percent of youth workers who teach on

⁵⁰ Joshua Moritz, “Considering God’s Word: Exploring the Interface between the Christian Faith and the Natural Sciences,” Syllabus, Berkeley Covenant Church <<http://www.scientistsincongregations.org/media/4-Berkeley%20Covenant%20Church%202-Syllabus-CGW.pdf>> {accessed July 5, 2015}.

⁵¹ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011): 131-48.

⁵² Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 136.

⁵³ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 137.

⁵⁴ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 140.

⁵⁵ Laura H. Lippman and Hugh McIntosh, “The Demographics of Spirituality and Religiosity Among Youth: International and U.S. Patterns,” *Child Trends Research Brief 21* (Spring 2010): 5-6. This publication provides a summary of research projects from the National Study on Youth and Religion, Spirituality and Higher Education, and the Monitoring the Future Study.

⁵⁶ Andrew Root and Erik Leafblad. “Youth Leader Survey.” Science for Youth Ministry, 2015 <<http://scienceym.org/youth-leader-survey/>> {accessed September 15, 2016}.

⁵⁷ Root and Leafblad, “Youth Leader Survey.”

faith and science prepare their own lessons, indicating that the resources available are inadequate. I would add that in addition to completely lacking resources, few youth workers possess the knowledge of how technically-minded students approach faith. As Root and Leafblad found, while the youth workers they surveyed agree that faith and science need not be at odds, very few (6%) majored in sciences as an undergraduate, and 59% took the bare minimum of science requirements for their degree(s).⁵⁸ While we can look upon these statistics as negative, they are rather symptomatic of the current fractured landscape of the faith-science divide.

Against the backdrop of these statistics, Kinnaman writes, “Young Christians who are called into positions of scientific inquiry and pedagogy ought to be encouraged by the Christian community to follow their callings to the utmost of their abilities. We need to help them discover how their chosen field of study and work is closely connected to God’s design for the world and for them.”⁵⁹ STEM professionals can step into the role of a professional and intellectual mentor to young people who express a proclivity toward scientific fields.

Over time involving STEM professionals in educational ministry can serve to foster an ecclesial culture keen on understanding the relationship between science and religion, as well as how the church can respond to new scientific developments in our society. Moreover, this can lead a positive witness in our communities, as the church can reposition itself to be a community of people who seek to integrate scientific knowledge with Biblical faith, as opposed to perpetuating false dichotomies. As churches describe the beauty and complexity of the created order that testifies to the one who brought everything into existence, people will need to respond to what they have seen. As William Dyrness writes, “Observation and analysis will remain essential because scientific knowledge has intrinsic value, but they alone will not be enough. The student will be called to *respond* to nature as well as understand it; indeed, the one will not be finally possible without the other.”⁶⁰

C. ENGAGING THE RATIONAL AND DELIGHTFUL ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

As Guy Consolmagno has noted, STEM professionals possess a strong orientation to understanding the mechanics of religion and understanding its usefulness and practicality. Thus, in ministering to and with them, pastors need to articulate the rational dimension of the Christian faith. It is not enough to believe on blind faith in the existence of God or the resurrection of Jesus Christ. STEM professionals need to understand the rationales that undergird these beliefs and practices. In teaching and ministering with these people, our claims to truth must

⁵⁸ Root and Leafblad, “Youth Leader Survey.”

⁵⁹ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 142.

⁶⁰ William A. Dyrness, “The Contribution of Theological Studies to the Christian Liberal Arts,” in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1987): 178.

be grounded in reality and in logic. Otherwise we lose our credibility as a religion that “makes sense.” This can take the form of discussing apologetics and the science that supports the truth of the Christian faith. However, demonstrating the philosophical and logical reasons for Christianity may make the more compelling case. The work of ancient thinkers such as Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as modern thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga and William Lane Craig, become all the more important when discussing matters of faith to those in STEM professions. Their arguments, such as the Kalam cosmological argument and the ontological argument, can serve as a means to demonstrate the rationality of Christian belief to religiously skeptical STEM professionals and to Christian STEM professionals seeking to strengthen their witness among their colleagues.

It is then incumbent upon the pastor to engage the philosophical and scientific arguments on why one should hold to the Christian faith. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson contend that the pastor theologian should not function as an academic specialist but rather a pastoral generalist.⁶¹ They write, “Like their academic counterparts, ecclesial theologians have a focus, an area of expertise. ... But as a pastor, there is a need for the ecclesial theologian to broaden beyond any one particular area of expertise.”⁶² This entails knowing and understanding a myriad of theological disciplines—Old Testament, New Testament, systematics, pastoral theology, etc.—and being “motivated to synthesize and issue prophetic calls.”⁶³ I would add apologetics and philosophy to this array of disciplines that pastors should embrace. Pastors, in an effort to minister to their congregants in STEM disciplines, need to saturate their ministry, especially their preaching and teaching, in logical reasoning, demonstrating the “why” of Christian faith.

As Consolmagno has shown us, religion must be more robust and richer than simply “following the rules.” Despite a proclivity toward technicality and objectivity, we should not view STEM professionals as solely rational beings with no experiences of beauty or emotion. To the contrary, Christian STEM professionals often describe a sense of intimacy with Christ through exploring creation. James K.A. Smith perceives of people as *lovers* first and *thinkers* second.⁶⁴ Smith proposes that Christian practices, those activities that Christians exercise over time that shape their ways of being and orient them toward a *telos*, serve to shape our affections. Therefore, “we are what we love.”⁶⁵ For the Christian STEM professional, practicing science serves as a means to love and worship the Creator. Karl Giberson, describing the jubilation that comes with exploring the science of creation, writes, “My belief in God provides a framework for

⁶¹ Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015): 96-97.

⁶² Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 96.

⁶³ Hiestand and Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian*, 97.

⁶⁴ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).

⁶⁵ James K.A. Smith, *You are What You Love*.

this celebration. In some way that I cannot articulate, I praise God for each new day, dimly aware that I am sharing the experience with the artist who put it all in place and put me here to enjoy it.”⁶⁶ Andy Crouch writes of the sense of worship and awe that scientists, both Christian and otherwise, experience in their work.

To be sure, many if not most scientists do not see this wonderful world in the way that most Christians would hope for. For us, wonder is a stepping-stone to worship—ascribing our awe for the world to a Creator whose worth it reveals. For many scientists, wonder is less a stepping-stone than a substitute for worship. Yet they stop and wonder all the same.⁶⁷

As pastors and ministry leaders, it is our responsibility to impart wisdom, insight, and excitement to those under our care. This is especially true when ministering to those who work in STEM professions.

CONCLUSION

While the cultural gap between science and religion might continue to increase, the church can serve as an institution where science and faith do not compete but complement one another in service to Christ. Pastors bear the responsibility of empowering individuals in STEM professions to use their gifts and talents in service to humanity and in service to the church. In this paper I have attempted to provide salient historical, theological, and sociological insight in order to craft pastoral ministry practices that engage the STEM professionals in our congregations. It is up to pastors and ministry leaders in congregations to develop robust ways of ministering to and working with STEM professionals in their presence. Who knows—the next Robert Boyle or Francis Collins may be in our midst!

⁶⁶ Karl Giberson, “The Beauty of Being a Scientist and a Christian,” *The Huffington Post* <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karl-giberson-phd/the-beauty-of-being-a-sci_b_546062.html> {accessed July 6, 2015}.

⁶⁷ Crouch, “What I Wish My Pastor Knew.”

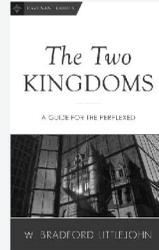
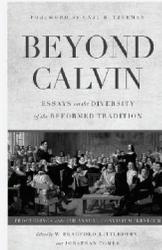
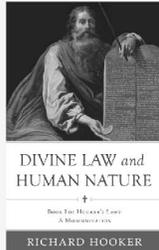
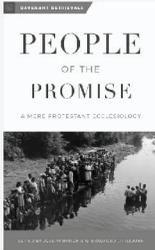
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A CONSECRATED COSMOS? FIRST TIMOTHY 4:1–5
IN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE

JEREMY MANN¹

The impetus of this article was a discussion at a symposium of the Third Fellowship of the Center for Pastor Theologians, hosted in Oak Park, Illinois. The discussion centered on the paper Dillon Thornton presented, now published in issue 4.1 of *The Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* under the title “Consecrated Creation: First Timothy 4:1–5 as an Underused Remedy for the Cosmological Dualism Prevalent in the Church.” Dillon is a gifted pastor theologian and his paper thoughtfully developed a number of insights. But as read it, I become increasingly convinced elements of his interpretation created more problems than it solved. This article is an elaboration of my misgivings and a counter-proposal. I offer it with a spirit of goodwill toward my brother in Christ, whom I have no doubt shares my desire to see God’s people filled with all wisdom. Every exegete awaits Christ’s appearing, the Word whom all our words imperfectly reflect—“to him be honor and eternal dominion” (1. Tim. 6:16).

I. FIRST TIMOTHY 4:1–5

In the New Testament the verb “sanctify” (ἀγιάζω) takes only persons as its object, except in two instances. The first exception, found in Matthew 23, bears relatively little theological significance for Christians under the new covenant, given its usage by Jesus for the sake of making an unrelated point to Mosaic-covenant keeping Jews.² The second exception is found

¹ Jeremy Mann is a PhD candidate at Wheaton College Graduate School, Director of Programming and Development for the Center for Pastor Theologians, and Head of School at the Field School in Chicago, Illinois.

² There are actually two occurrences of ἀγιάζω in Matthew 23:17–19: “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that *has made* the gold *sacred*? And you say, ‘Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.’ How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar *that makes*

in 1 Tim. 4:4–5: “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is *sanctified* by God’s word and by prayer.”³ The significance of the claim that everything created in some sense is or can be consecrated has drawn the attention of theologians and Bible scholars interested in the doctrine of creation. This article, working from both an exegesis of 1 Tim. 4:1–5 and a theological account of creation’s status before God, seeks to articulate a precise understanding of the nature of creation’s sanctified, or holy, character. My goal is to describe creation’s goodness and value without overstating the case. As will be shown, inattention to the conditions of creation’s holiness, conditions related to both intention and temporality, distorts the meaning of the passage and warps the larger picture of creation. A more chastened approach recognizes here an incomplete sanctification, mediated by God’s people, yet still powerfully suggestive of a future, fully consecrated cosmos.

To understand the nature of creation’s consecration, the broader context surrounding 1 Tim. 4:4–5 must be considered. Particularly important is the larger occasion(s) for Paul writing to Timothy.⁴ 1 Timothy 1:3 is an important clue: “I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine.” At least one major reason Paul writes is to support Timothy’s confrontation of those teaching a deviant doctrine, apparently both speculative (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:23) and clouded by arrogance (1 Tim. 1:6–7; 3:6; 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:2). One broad theme of this false teaching concerns the eschaton.⁵ These false teachers seemed to take the resurrection as a purely spiritual event, fully realized in the present (2 Tim. 2:18). Immaterializing the believer’s resurrection, which was tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection, was in Paul’s assessment both a betrayal of the apostolic gospel and indirect service to the church’s chief adversary, Satan (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:26). The ethical implications of this eschatological view meant that marriage and

the gift *sacred*.” Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

³ Roloff’s claim that besides these two occurrences *ἀγιάζω* is always used of *human* persons is not quite correct. The term is used in the Lord’s prayer to speak of the hallowing of the Father’s name. See Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 226.

⁴ While the majority of New Testament scholars today hold that the Pastoral Epistles are written by either an individual or group extending Paul’s writing ministry, I will simply refer to the author of these letters as “Paul,” given that the debate is inconclusive and this is the designation provided in the documents themselves. Paul’s authorship is defended in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 55–99; and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 9–88. The opposing position can be found in Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 4; Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, 22 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), 54–66.

⁵ William L. Lane, “1 Tim. IV 1–3. An Early Instance of Over-Realized Eschatology?” *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 166.

motherhood were inappropriate (1 Tim. 2:15; 4:3); Timothy's opponents also devised some sort of resurrection diet (1 Tim. 4:2-3).

This larger demand of asceticism provides the occasion for Paul to re-establish a robust doctrine of creation in 1 Tim. 4:4-5, a necessary rebuttal of the proto-gnostic wholesale denigration of material world, or at least the conviction that creation was an impediment to salvation.⁶ It is interesting to note that while the authorities mentioned by Paul in v. 1 ("deceitful spirits and teachings of demons") are not the "rulers" (*ἀρχαίς*) and "powers" (*ἐξουσίαις*) elsewhere understood to be false spiritual oppressors (Col. 2:16) or mere imposters of divinity (*εἰδωλα*) (1 Cor. 8:5-6), the result is the same: fixation on the power of spiritual opposition corresponds with both cultic regression and esoteric mutation. Brevard Childs, pointing out an abiding concern of biblical accounts of God's creating and sustaining power, writes, "The effect of this understanding of creation was to *desacralize* the world by removing all demonic and mythical powers from it and by subordinating them to the sole power of the one creator. In the New Testament Jesus exercised supreme power over the spiritual powers, and in his conquering of the demons demonstrated his control as creator."⁷

An expansive view of God's creative rule establishes the first premise of Paul's response to restrictions on diet and sex: "For everything created by God is good" (1 Tim. 4:4). The preliminary conclusion, stated just prior, maintains that the proper response is not forced abstinence, but reception "with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (4:3). The proximity of marriage, creation, food, and goodness suggest an intertextual echo to Genesis 1.⁸ The logic of Paul's argument serves as inverted instance of *modus ponens*, with the major premise supplied by opening chapter of the Bible. Since food is something made by God, and everything made by God is good, God's people should have no concern with dietary restrictions.

II. A CONSECRATED COSMOS?

Here we must pause to note a further conclusion that is reasonable and increasingly common, but, as I will argue, not warranted. Paul Trebilco, meditating on Paul's words to Timothy, writes, "The Earth community does not consist of disposable matter; rather it is holy and sacred by virtue of being created and sanctified by God."⁹ Dillon Thornton describes

⁶ Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 80.

⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection On the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 1. 399.

⁸ Thus Richard Hays, "Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A. ... Metalepsis...places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences." See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 20.

⁹ Paul Trebilco, "The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1-5)," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 217-218.

things similarly: “the entire cosmos is consecrated.”¹⁰ Although the claim is further nuanced and largely expressed in proper service of encouraging responsible care for God’s good world, both authors are comfortable describing creation as consecrated, without remainder. “All creation—not just specific places—is seen as being sanctified...”¹¹ Commentators agree that however this be understood, Paul is doing more than simply reminding his readers that creation is good.¹² As Trebilco puts it: “By speaking of creation as not only good—as in Genesis 1—but also as sanctified, our text, when compared with a passage like Genesis 1, sees creation as having additional value and worth.”¹³

Trebilco and Thornton interpret the “conditions” of this consecration described in verse 4: “if received with thanksgiving” and verse 5: “[made holy] by the word of God and prayer” as proper human recognition of something already true. According to Trebilco, “Facets of creation are to be received *with thanksgiving to God* (rather than simply received) precisely because they are ‘set apart,’ sanctified by God.”¹⁴ Thus thankful reception is the result of recognition of God’s prior sanctification; it is itself not material to the status of what is received. Thornton expresses something similar: “Prayer does not take the place of God’s creation pronouncement or add anything mystical to it,” and then quotes Gordon Fee: “The prayer of thanksgiving has inherent in it the recognition of God’s prior creative action.”¹⁵

As I will work to show, there are good reasons for thinking this passage should not be read as saying that all creation is consecrated. Before doing so, however, it should be acknowledged that both Trebilco and Thornton recognize some future further redemption for the created order. From Thornton: “The whole world awaits that future day when it will be liberated from its present plight of decay.”¹⁶ By maintaining this, one wonders if what I will argue would find real objection from Trebilco and Thornton, or if their understanding of creation’s holiness could be restated to accommodate my concern. To this we now turn.

¹⁰ Dillon Thornton, “Consecrated Creation: First Timothy 4:1–5 as an Underused Remedy for Cosmological Dualism Prevalent in the Church,” in *The Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology*, vol. 4.1(2017), 21.

¹¹ Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation,” 218.

¹² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 296; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: a New Translation with Notes and Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 364; I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentar. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 189.

¹³ Paul Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation,” 217–218.

¹⁴ Paul Trebilco, “the Goodness and Holines of the Earth and the Whole Creation,” 211, emphasis his.

¹⁵ Dillon Thornton, “Consecrated Creation,” 21. The Fee quote: Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 100.

¹⁶ Dillon Thornton, “Consecrated Creation,” 21.

III. CONDITIONAL CONSECRATION

I believe there are reasons for reading the claim about creation's consecration differently. First, we must recognize the potency of the process under consideration. As has been mentioned, sanctifying language (also rendered "to consecrate" or "to make holy") occurs only in special instances in the New Testament.¹⁷ This should not be surprising, given the divine significance of the concept: "Holiness is the primary way of describing God and his ultimate means of revealing who he is."¹⁸ Filling the throne room of God, "day after day, night after night" is the praise of God's incomparable nature and character: "Holy, holy, holy."¹⁹ In the New Testament, the object of sanctification is most often the people of God, at times serving as a way of categorizing the redeemed: "those who are sanctified" (Acts. 20:32). Jesus uses the language of sanctification to describe his role as the Son sent by the Father to be the savior of his people (John 10:36: 17:19). He says he sanctifies himself "for their sakes," that they also "may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). Paul describes the Corinthian church as "those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). While it warrants a lengthy treatment on its own, cleanness is not used in Scripture as a synonym for holiness.²⁰ Later in this paper we will examine a unique case of ἁγιαζω, but now it sufficient to say it is unlikely that the term generally and in 1 Tim. 4:5 is simply referring to dietary purity laws.²¹

¹⁷ Later in this paper a brief examination of the Old Testament roots of the concept of holiness will be explored from a theological perspective. While the conceptual emphasis changes from Old Testament to New Testament, the basic idea of holiness remains the same. J. A. Naude's definition in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* captures well both the core concept and the Old Testament inflection: "Holiness is the essential nature that belongs to the sphere of God's being or activity and that is distinct from the common or profane." Is there an entry name for this, something like: See J. A. Naude "Holiness" in Willem Vangemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Third ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 879.

¹⁸ William M. Ury, "Holiness," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 343.

¹⁹ Revelation 4:8; Isaiah 6:3.

²⁰ Thus Raymond Collins: "The Pastor does not reference language of 'cleanness' or 'purity' to speak about food like Rom. 14:20 ('Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean.') and Acts 10:15 (What God has made clean, you must not call profane')." See Raymond F. Collins, *I and II Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013], 117. Mark Boda's sustained treatment on Leviticus is compelling on the three graded zones of holy, clean, and unclean, in which clean and unclean are not opposites but two kinds of non-holiness. See Boda, Mark. *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Siphut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 51. I believe this classification continues in the New Testament. At the same time, there is reason for thinking "holy" and "unclean" are occasionally used synonymously, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:14 "Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy..."

²¹ This is George Knight's position; he maintains that ἁγιαζω is "used here in the general sense of being declared fit, acceptable, or good for use or consumption." See George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 291.

Once we have understood the significance of the claim of sanctification, we can return to the conditions of reception. As was shown, Trebilco and Thornton consider these caveats relatively trivial, at least with respect to the status of what is received. There is reason, however, to view the conditions as substantive, and to overlook their import threatens to undermine the point Paul is making.

The first condition is that God's provision is intended to be "received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (v. 3). Like in John 17:19, knowledge of the truth corresponds with sanctification. The manner of thanksgiving is not a recognition of fortune or vague feelings of gratitude: *εὐχαριστίας*, in verses 3 and 4, is the term used for prayers of thanksgiving only to God, in many cases at meals.²² In verse 3, the word for "received," *μετάληψις* (New Testament, hapax), translated by Luke Timothy Johnson as "shared," "may indicate [Paul] has the corporate life of the church in mind."²³

This distinctive language in the passage does not suggest a universal scope, i.e., that aspects of creation *not* received with thanksgiving or prayer are just as consecrated as those that are. The conditionality of consecration can be brought into sharper relief by comparing 1 Tim. 4:3-5 to Rom. 14:14, which reads: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but *it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.*"²⁴ While it has been mentioned that holiness is conceptually related to but distinct from purity, the point in Romans implies that proper reception of God's good gifts (whether clean or holy) is in part a function of the receiver's conscience. The conscience determines the intentions, e.g., gratitude or ingratitude, one can have toward any given object.

The means by which something is consecrated concludes verse 5: "γὰρ δὴ λόγου θεοῦ καὶ ἐντεύξεως." The "word of God" can be interpreted in a number of ways. The two most likely are (1) it refers to God's statements following the act of creation that everything is good.²⁵ This connects well with the earlier echoes of Gen. 1 and would be particularly effective at disarming the opponents, if Towner is correct about their goal of recreating the Garden of Eden's vegetarianism and its lack of (formal) marriage.²⁶ I prefer the view (2) that "the word of God" is the gospel message, which includes both the eclipse of food laws but also, more fundamentally, the beginning of the consecration of the whole world through Jesus. This would put the phrase in parallel with the previous phrase, "those who are faithful and know the truth, (1 Tim. 4:3b), which refers to those who believe the gospel; it would also connect with verse 6, where "word" is

²² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 301.

²³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. v. 35A, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 240

²⁴ Emphasis mine.

²⁵ This is the most popular interpretation among commentators.

²⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 102.

used again to describe the faith, “the sound teaching” that Paul believes Timothy has followed.

More broadly, “word of God” means the gospel when it is used elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles, e.g., “Remember Jesus Christ...as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the *word of God* is not bound!” (2 Tim. 2:9) and Titus 2:5, and similar expressions mean the same thing in 2 Tim. 2:15 and 4:2. Paul uses the expression elsewhere to mean the gospel (1 Cor. 14:36; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Phil. 1:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 1:8; 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:1). Also, in contrast to the much more common aorist and perfect forms of ἀγιάζω, the verb is in the present tense, suggesting a current, ongoing action or process.²⁷ The statements of God in Gen. 1 about the goodness of creation could be understood as a kind of on-going declaration that undergirds holiness as well (the first interpretation of “word of God”), but a more natural reading views the phrase as illustrating the sanctifying power of the gospel’s progressive advance since the new revelation of Jesus.²⁸

These textual factors suggest that only believers of the gospel—hearers of the divine word—partake of something consecrated, as they are the only ones prepared to offer true thanks by faith. Rather than arguing for a universally consecrated creation, Paul thus appears to be making a point in the opposite direction: those sanctified by God, through their grateful prayer of thanksgiving, sanctify in turn, i.e., *set apart*, that which God has created. This conclusion opens a path to a parallel line of evidence beyond exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy. Let us now consider the theological rationale for viewing the word of God as communicating the liberating, consecrating gospel word, thereby supporting a narrower reading of creation’s sanctification.

IV. THEOLOGICAL RENDERINGS OF CREATION’S HOLINESS

A robust doctrine of creation articulates its claims with intentional reference to related dogmatic loci, given the doctrine’s supporting role in the larger story of the Father’s salvation of his people in the Son, brought about by the Spirit. Karl Barth’s interpretation of creation reads it through the lens of God’s covenant: “The ascription of this position and function to man does not mean that the rest of creation is excluded from this mystery; it describes the manner of its inclusion.”²⁹ Kathryn Tanner

²⁷ While I hesitate to wade into discussion of verbal aspect and *Aktionsart*, I trust the basic point is not controversial. See Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

²⁸ On the grammatical point, see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Revised ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 166. “The durative (linear or progressive) in the present stem: the action is represented as durative (in progress) and either as timeless (ἔστιν ὁ θεός) or as taking place in present time (including, of course, duration on one side or the other of the present moment: γράφω ‘I am writing [now]’;...The present stem may also be iterative: ἔβαλλεν ‘threw repeatedly (or each time)’.”

²⁹ Barth, *CD III/1*, 187. Similar comments in *CD III/1*, 178 and 223.

rightly points out that this subordination does not threaten the reality of God's plan to restore all things: "Humanity has its hope in Christ in indissoluble connection with the hope of the whole cosmos."³⁰ To speak of the *hope* of the cosmos helps establish the dynamic nature of creation's character. A "once-for-all-time" reading of God's creation flattens the rich movement of Scripture.

Tracing the trajectory of creation's consecration begins in Genesis 1. While all that God creates is said to be good, scriptural imagery depicts the Garden of Eden as a verdant temple precinct. After their sin, the guilt of Adam and Eve forces them to be exiled outside the space of holy communion with God. The separation of the holy from the profane in Israel's history finds an early, vivid depiction in God telling Moses to remove his shoes because the ground on which he stood was holy (Exod. 3:5). The Exodus draws Israel out from Egypt both literally and figuratively, so that Israel might be "holy nation," uniquely devoted to God (Exod. 19:1–6). Yet in this very separation from its neighbors Israel stands as a "kingdom of priests" through whom God displays his character to the world and fulfills his promise to bring blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:1–3).

After Sinai, this consecration was formalized with spatial, personal, ritual, and temporal dimensions.³¹ The expectation of expansion, however, is maintained. Prophetic passages, like Zechariah 14:20, depict the expansion of consecrated space into all domains of life: "On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the Lord.'" And the cooking pots in the house of the Lord shall be as holy as the bowls in front of the altar..." Ezekiel's vision of the Jerusalem to come centers on a central temple where God dwells. This idea is underscored in the final apocalyptic vision of Scripture, where in Rev. 21 an impressionistic picture of the restoration of all things is painted, with Jerusalem as an eternal Holy of Holies. "The whole city is sanctified through the presence of God and the Lamb; every inhabitant is a 'high priest' with unrestricted access to the inner sanctuary..."³²

But the story and significance of Jesus is the concern of the New Testament. Part of his significance as the one through whom all things were created is a corresponding identity as the one through whom all things are restored. To borrow Bauckham's phrasing, the Bible is "a Christological eco-narrative."³³ Given this, the story's close depends on resolution of the main character's conflict. Romans 8 says "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (v. 19), for then it "will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the

³⁰ Kathryn Tanner, "Creation and Providence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125

³¹ These four helpful categories were established with field-defining influence in K.C.W. Bähr, *Symbolik des mosaichen Cultus*, 2 vols. 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1874).

³² Dean Flemming, "On Earth as it is in Heaven: Holiness and the People of God in Revelation," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, eds. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 355.

³³ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 151.

freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21). Verse 23 says the children of God also anticipate the future redemption of our bodies, but we now have “the first fruits of the Spirit,” identified in 1 Cor. 15:20 and 23 as Christ. Thus, like creation, the full manifestation of the identity of the saints themselves, *οἱ ἅγιοι*, is eschatological. “The holy ones... does not mean ‘the morally perfect’ people: it means the people who participate in the mystery of the final Day.”³⁴ This final Day, the Sabbath rest for God’s people (Heb. 4:9), is like the final day of creation, which God blessed “and made it holy” (Gen. 2:3). That Sabbath rest for God’s people has not arrived. As I see it, Trebilco and Thornton have prematurely celebrated creation’s liberation from its bondage of decay, minimizing the extent to which this final holy rest requires the return of creation’s king.

The second relevant point of Romans 8 is that creation’s orientation toward God—its proper sacred service—is mediated through his people. Their revelation is what creation is said to eagerly await. Relevant here is the single instance of *ἀγιάζω* referring in the New Testament to something other than the Godhead or his people (aside from 1 Tim. 4:5), 1 Cor. 7:14a: “For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband.” Here the etymological root of holiness, “set apart,” is the best reading, but the broader spiritual task is the same: God’s people function as instruments of sanctification, mediating the consecrating power of God to an unholy world. The site of God’s presence on earth, once the temple of stones and gold in the Old Testament, now becomes God’s people, “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) with faith “more precious than gold” (1 Pet. 1:7), laid according to the cornerstone, Christ (1 Pet. 2:6).

To return to the question of all creation’s holiness, we thus recognize that the mediation of sanctification by God’s holy nation depends on its union with Christ. Raymond Collins, reflecting on the distinctive word rendered “prayer” in verse 5 (*ἐντευξις*), found only in 1 Timothy, is instructive: “To receive God’s gifts with thanksgiving is to have an encounter with God.”³⁵ Calling all of creation holy, as Trebilco and Thornton do, sidelines the mediatory role of the church, given that God’s people have not “set apart” with their thanksgiving all of creation. It also collapses the final act of God’s grand drama, eliminating any space that remains unconsecrated.

It can hardly be questioned that renewed interest in the doctrine of creation among Evangelicals has brought many benefits. The dignity of all honest earthly work, the picture of God’s glory painted by the natural world, and greater perception of the integrity of the “natural” and the “spiritual” are rich blessings for God’s people. There is, however, a danger in over-correction. Something like “sacramania” has crept into all kinds of discourse on creation, as theologians, artists, and ordinary Christians are tempted to reach for any word that can help express the goodness, mystery, and transcendence of God’s good gifts. Leaders of the church would be

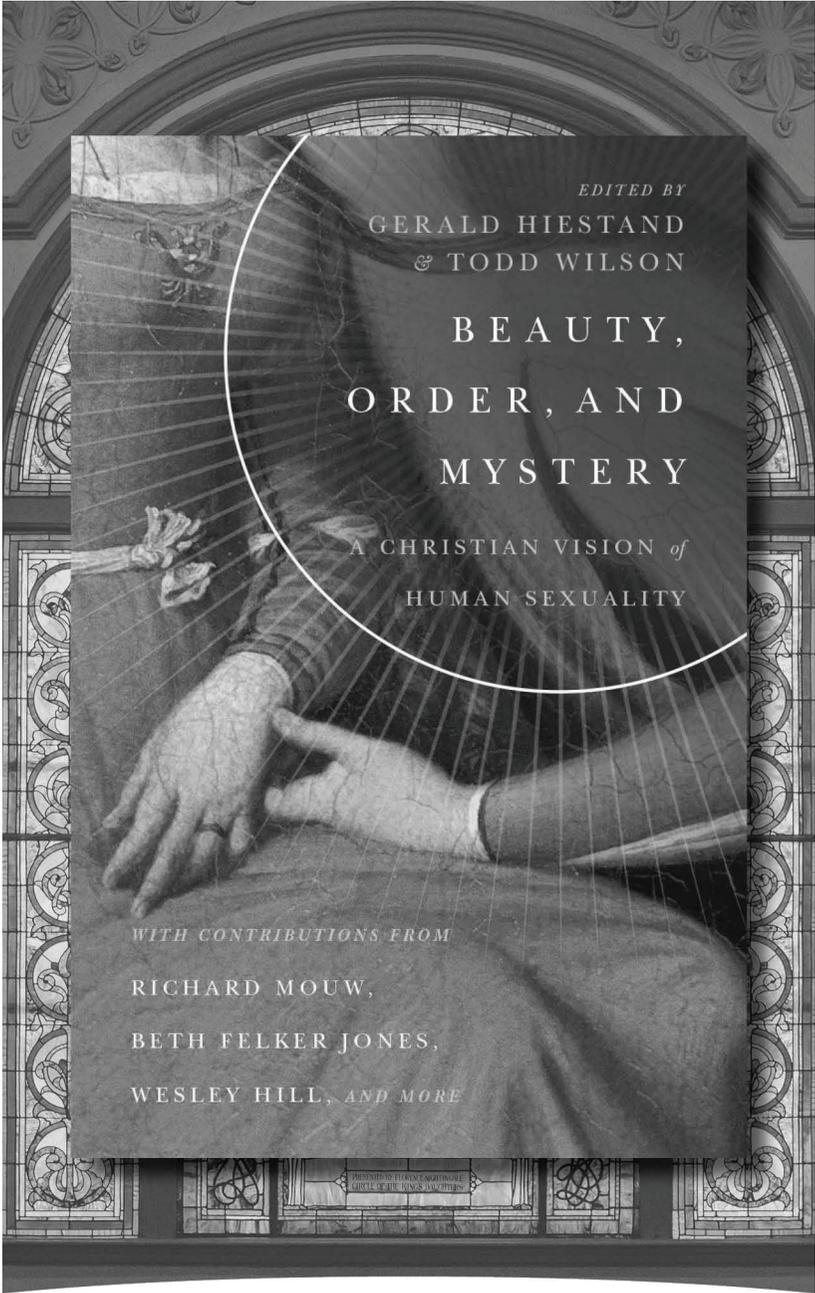
³⁴ Rudolf Otto, *Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 86.

³⁵ Raymond F. Collins, *I and II Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 118.

wise to encourage enthusiastic delight in creation while simultaneously offering more precise language. The uniqueness of the incarnation, God's ordained means of grace, and the distinctive identity of the church are all threatened by indiscriminate application of terms like "sacred," "holy," and "sacramental." The blessings of the present world are indeed very good, but an indispensable aspect of their purpose is to point toward a future, *better* world. A satisfying meal that does not cause us to yearn all the more deeply for the marriage supper of the lamb is actually a snare. Discerning pastoral care must prayerfully test all things, and in the power of the Spirit Christians must continually seek the giver, not just the gift.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to show that there are both exegetical and theological reasons for not reading the holiness of creation as universal. At the same time, I have not denied the significance of consecration altogether. Instead, consecration has been here articulated as real but conditional, dependent on both the resurrection power of the gospel and God's people intentionally "setting apart" creation for service to its ultimate ends. The exegetical and theological lines of evidence have been shown to relate to one another, clarifying the sense in which Paul seeks to aid Timothy's rebuke of the false teachers in Ephesus and reinforcing a larger doctrine of creation. Pastors seeking to emphasize the critical work of the church should read 1 Timothy 4:1-5 and rejoice; God's people and their grateful mediation of God's power is no superfluous pantomime. Through their holy hands the Creator is beginning his work of making all things new. Essay Title



EDITED BY
GERALD HIESTAND
& TODD WILSON

BEAUTY,
ORDER, AND
MYSTERY

A CHRISTIAN VISION *of*
HUMAN SEXUALITY

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
RICHARD MOUW,
BETH FELKER JONES,
WESLEY HILL, AND MORE



CENTER FOR
PASTOR THEOLOGIANs



IVP Academic

BOOK REVIEWS

J. Ryan Davidson, *A Covenant Feast: Reflections on the Lord's Table*.
Apollo, PA: Ichthus Publications, 2016. 126 pp. \$9.99.

Perhaps it is my personal experience or the similar experiences of others in my little corner of Reformed evangelical Christianity, but I have observed a resurgence of interest in, and seriousness about, the sacraments in recent years. In an evangelical subculture where there are (hopefully apocryphal) stories of youth leaders serving the Holy Eucharist with Cool Ranch Doritos and Mountain Dew, this is certainly a welcome development.

In the summer of 2015, J. Ryan Davidson added to this resurgence with a series of sermons on the Lord's Table at Grace Baptist Chapel in Hampton, Virginia. These sermons were subsequently edited and published in this short book.

The first chapter discusses the nature and meaning of the Lord's Supper, the second explains what it means to fellowship with Jesus at the Table, including an argument and explanation for the real spiritual presence of Christ in the supper, and the final chapter instructs Christians how to prepare for and come to the Table.

In the first chapter Davidson argues that the central meaning of the Lord's Table is as a covenant sign and so reassures us of our place in the new covenant. It is a visible sign that gives us a tangible experience of our union with Christ and reminds us of the coming feast in the new creation. In short, in the Lord's Supper, God has given us a tangible reminder of his gracious promises to us.

Chapter two explains Davidson's view of what exactly is happening when we come to the Table. "When we come to the Table in faith, through the Spirit, we are communing with the risen Christ" (68). In a compelling explanation of what Paul means by participating in the body of Christ in 1 Cor 10:16, Davidson defends what is commonly called the "spiritual presence" view of the Lord's Table against other prominent views.

In the last chapter, Davidson reflects on how we should approach the Lord's Table. In light of his argument in the first two chapters, Davidson suggests that the best way to come to the Table is by looking to the gospel. In other words, if Communion is rooted in the new covenant and is a means of spiritual nourishment for members of that covenant, then we

ought to prepare to come to the table by returning to the gospel that is the foundation for our participation in the meal. Therefore, when Paul talks about the dangers of coming to the Table in an unworthy manner in 1 Cor 11:27, and about not discerning the body in vs. 29, these are warnings against failing to see the connection between the Table and the good news. Davidson paraphrases Paul's argument: "When you come to the Table and you partake without discerning the connection between sign and the thing signified, namely, the body of Christ [and his death for us], then you are eating the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner" (107).

As a happily sacramental Baptist, I find Davidson's argument throughout the book compelling. Beyond this general observation, however, the book's greatest strength may be the pastoral illustrations and applications that should drive us to the Table more regularly and expectantly. For example, in chapter two, Davidson drives home the truth that when we take Communion "we are changed *and* we are fed (79, emphasis original). He illustrates this truth with an anecdote from his own family. When he and his wife cut back the number of snacks they allowed their children to eat, they discovered they were eating more and better food at meal times. In the same way, we tend to look for fellowship with Jesus in many small ways while not giving sufficient attention to the meal he has given to us. It is my suspicion that many Christians do not realize the gift they are given when they come to the Table, and Davidson's book provides many similar encouragements to come and partake in the Lord's Supper.

While I have little substantive criticism of Davidson's arguments in the book, it is clear that the book was originally intended as a sermon series. In fact, Davidson himself concedes in the introduction that the book still has a number of sermonic features (repetition, an overly conversational tone, etc.). While I'm not necessarily opposed to adopting sermons for use in print, a more thorough revision may have increased the clarity and usefulness of this book. Furthermore, since the book was originally a sermon series, those who are looking for sustained refutation of differing views on the nature of the Lord's Supper may be disappointed. While Davidson does briefly interact with the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and memorialist/Zwinglian views, he does not spend much time explaining the strengths and weaknesses of these competing positions. Having said that, however, I would still recommend this book to any pastor or serious Christian who wants a better understanding of the nature and benefits of the Lord's Supper. Sympathetic readers will be encouraged, and I suspect that those who have other views will be, if not persuaded to change their minds, more eager and expectant when they come to the Table after reading Davidson's book.

Chris Bruno
Bethlehem College and Seminary
Minneapolis, MN

Chris Bruno. *The Whole Message of the Bible in 16 Words*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017. 160 pp. \$10.99.

One of the alarming trends in the church today is the stunning lack of biblical literacy. As many have noted, the number of people who can adequately summarize key aspects of biblical theology and Christian doctrine are decreasing with each passing year. Catechetical resources that aim to educate believers in the essentials of the faith are necessary to reverse this trend. Thankfully, Chris Bruno's *The Whole Message of the Bible in 16 Words* aims specifically toward providing believers with a rich yet bite-sized intro to biblical theology. For Bruno, the goal of biblical theology is "to trace the progressive development of a theme or cluster of themes in the Bible" (p. 12). Using 16 words as a guide to navigating the biblical storyline, Bruno takes readers on a journey to understand the unfolding message of the Bible.

Bruno divides his work into three sections: *Foundation*, *Frame*, and *Superstructure*. In *Foundation*, he begins by exploring "The End" (eschatology), operating under an "already, not yet" framework. For Bruno, it is crucial to begin here because "the end shapes the whole story" (p. 20). Next, he describes "God" (theology proper), arguing that He is our "self-sufficient Creator and King, who judges sin and redeems his people" through Jesus (p. 31). With these fundamental underpinnings in tow, Bruno moves to part II, *Frame*, where he explores "Creation," "Covenant," and "Kingdom." The Creator God has always dealt with humans through covenants, as evidenced by the covenants he initiated with major figures in the Old and New Testaments. All of these covenants find their final fulfillment in Jesus Christ. "God reigns as King in his sovereign rule over creation," bringing salvation to sinners through Christ and ruling over the new creation (p. 59).

In part II, *Superstructure*, Bruno outlines several major concepts throughout Scripture that are essential in understanding the message of the Bible. Bruno explores "Temple," "Messiah," "Israel," "Land," "Idols," "Judgment," "Exodus," "Wisdom," "Law," "Spirit," and "Mission." Bruno masterfully gives brief biblical theologies of each of these themes, highlighting their inherently Christological nature. For example, in the chapter on "Judgment," Bruno begins by highlighting the judgment on Adam and Eve and describes God's judgment on the Israelites throughout the Old Testament. Finally, he describes how Jesus took God's judgment upon himself for us on the cross. Suitably, the last theme is "Mission," which Bruno describes as essential for furthering the glory of God and spreading the gospel to the nations. To conclude the book, Bruno encourages readers to dig into the Bible themselves and provides a helpful list of resources geared toward helping laypersons gain a better grasp on biblical theology.

Each chapter provides helpful key verses for readers to gain a sense of how the theme is operationalized in the Old and New Testaments. Bruno also includes summary statements that follow a similar pattern so that readers may better understand how each theme functions in

Scripture. The book's audience is laypersons who want an introduction to biblical theology. Bruno possesses the ability to condense rich biblical theology into short, punchy chapters that provide snapshots of biblical themes which laypersons will appreciate. Seasoned pastor theologians will also appreciate this volume, as Bruno demonstrates how to effectively communicate biblical theology to laypersons. What I appreciate about this volume is that it does not shy away from complexity, but rather untangles complex biblical themes that illuminate the message of the Bible. The volume will make an excellent Bible study for newcomers to the faith who need catechesis, while seasoned laypersons will appreciate the fresh perspective Bruno brings to understanding the message of the Bible.

Benjamin D. Espinoza
Great Lakes Christian College
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI

Edward H. Gerber. *The Scriptural Tale in the Fourth Gospel: With Particular Reference to the Prologue and a Syncretic (Oral and Written) Poetics*. Biblical Interpretation Series 147. Leiden: Brill, 2017, x + 396 pp., \$138.00.

Whether the Fourth Gospel is shallow or deep is a perennial question informed readers raise of John. It is to the depth of John's Gospel—and its “coherent scriptural sub-story”—that Edward Gerber intends to plumb in his work, *The Scriptural Tale in the Fourth Gospel*. Gerber's main contention is that the Gospel tells the story of Jesus by way of a highly evocative retelling of the stories of Adam and Israel. The Gospel does this through a storytelling framework of number-patterning that was effective for hearers in oral contexts. Much of what John communicates is driven by this patterning because it evokes the stories of Israel filtered through the community memory that was available—to some degree—to the original readers of the Gospel (p. 62). Gerber spends much of his time on the prologue, attempting to demonstrate that it displays the Adam/Israel framework that is called on by John throughout the Gospel. The evocative stories of Adam and Israel form this “coherent scriptural sub-story” (what Gerber calls the “scriptural tale”) retold within the Gospel (p. 350). Gerber's approach to understanding this evocative communication is through what he calls “syncretic poetics,” a theory that considers not just literary phenomena but also oral phenomena still detectable in the text. Once established, Gerber suggests that there are seven primary “moves” that the story of Israel undergoes (many which also comprise the big ideas of the Old Testament), and that John contains deep structures that are built on each of these seven moves—forming a series of heptads that extend from the prologue to the end of the Gospel.

The layout of *Scriptural Tale* also follows a heptadic scheme, with three sections. In the first section, “A Story Told?” the first chapter orients

the reader to the intent of Gerber's research. Here he notes that while there is clear and incontrovertible evidence that the Fourth Gospel looks back to the foundational narratives, there has been little work in the way of trying to find a structuring scheme (a "storyboard design," p. 19) to the Fourth Gospel that may relate to these stories. Gerber gathers a number of durable examples for how and why ancient writers would retell old stories in the process of telling new stories. In the second chapter, Gerber explains the importance of narrative knowledge to the community of believers who produced the Fourth Gospel. These believers would have remembered and recited the primary stories of their community, as at a fundamental level, these stories (and their connection to them) are what held the community together. In then turning around and telling the story of Jesus, it would be natural for the community to frame it in a way that made sense to them—in light of the events of the foundational stories of their faith. Chapter Three centers on Gerber's method, with much interest expressed in the work of John Miles Foley on ancient theories of orality. Gerber's point here includes a critique of recent works in biblical intertextuality, such as those of Richard Hays, because of their dominant focus on literary ("verbal") allusions and avoidance of oral ("aural") allusions, even though NT texts were products of predominantly oral, not literary, cultures. Instead of rejecting literary allusions, Gerber's approach is to use insights from both literary and oral allusions found in the text.

In Part Two, "A Story Told in the Beginning?" the fourth chapter spotlights the prologue of John. Gerber argues that the prologue "previews and spearheads what the Gospel then unfolds," pointing to not just thematic and structural relationships between the prologue and the body of the Gospel, but also "according to their implicit stories" (p. 118). Gerber suggests that "the constellation of language and themes used in the prologue also appear to assume and evoke an idiosyncratic and eschatologically-charged story-pattern rooted specifically in Adam and temple theology" (p. 119). Thus, "this story is about Adam and Israel's decisive role or vocation in a cosmos that is conceptualized in temple terms ... [which] the Fourth Evangelist has in mind and evokes in the prologue as a deliberate anticipation of what will be worked out and, indeed, 'played with,' more fully in the rest of his Gospel" (p. 123). To do this, Gerber suggests that there are seven steps to the "rise-and-fall" structure of the Adam/Israel stories, which can be synthesized into a "template of eschatological hope," is present in a number of ancient texts (Ezekiel, Zechariah, Sirach, Joseph and Aseneth, etc.), and is evoked in the prologue. Turning to Chapter Five, Gerber builds off the previous chapter to explain how "vv. 1–13 [of the prologue] retell the career of the Logos *asarkos* while highlighting the Logos' successive 'failures' to find a home in Adam, the world, and Israel ... these rejections imply a failure by humanity of its vocation as the image-bearers and/or idols of God that is then shown to be answered in vv.14–18 by the Logos *ensarkos*" (p. 160). Gerber starts with an often-held idea, that the Logos is a "complex figure" summoned by John to serve as an actor ... in a larger drama" (p. 166). Next, Gerber goes verse by verse through the prologue to explain the story patterning of the prologue against the two primary narratives

of Adam and Israel. Key to Gerber's argument is John 1:14, "the climax of the prologue" and "utterly exceptional" in its theological thought (p. 120), a statement that claims "that the very one in whose image Adam was made, a being quite possibly understood as the 'heavenly' Adam and Image of God himself, had become his own earthly reflection" (p. 208). The goal, then, of the prologue is to show that "Jesus as the Incarnate Logos is shown by [John] to be the answer to the problem of Adam and Israel's failures of vocation" (p. 208). These two chapters are the heart and strength of Gerber's work.

The third part, "A Story Told to the End?" opens with the sixth chapter, wherein Gerber suggests that "a traditional oral form in cooperation with other oral-traditional elements has informed the underlying macrostructure of the FG" (p. 239), with this macrostructure informed from the seven foundational stories of the OT. In order to create this macrostructure, Gerber argues that the Fourth Gospel is comprised of approximately five heptads: Seven Days (1:1–2:11), Seven Signs (2:1–12:50), Seven Days (12:1–19:42), Seven Days (20:1–31), and Seven Disciples (21:1–25) (p. 244). The primary reason for heptads is for oral configuration and as a media device to tell (and retell) the Johannine story. In the penultimate chapter, Gerber attempts to show how the story-pattern of the seven foundational stories—primarily creation, Israel's exodus, and the Promised Land conquest/resettlement—were packaged within the first four heptads. These stories, Gerber concludes, were an intentional outworking of the scriptural tale started in the prologue. Included is a brief conclusion that summarizes some of the key moves of the book.

Gerber's thesis is audacious in its scope in trying to resolve several issues that Johannine studies have long wrestled with. His attempt to refocus the poetics of the Fourth Gospel to include oral cultural considerations is needed, and it allows him room to make arguments that would go unnoticed if just considering the final form of the text. His theological development of the Logos asarkos/ensarkos concept as it relates to the revelation of Adam/Israel is worth further pursuit. Gerber has convincingly argued that the Gospel is imbued with the 'narrative stuff' of the Primary History—at a far deeper level than is often supposed when merely hunting for quotes, allusions and echoes. And yet, the need to fit all of this raw material into a patterned form is less convincing, at least for this reviewer. The problem with the evocative is just that, it is evocative. Thus, it is hard to make and defend definitive statements about evocations in what is also claimed to be an intentionally-structured format. More work may need to be done to bridge the gap between strong evocations and strong narrative organization. Highly recommended for those working on the Gospel of John and all theological research libraries.

Douglas Estes
South University
Columbia, South Carolina

Douglas Estes and Ruth Sheridan, eds. *How John Works: Storytelling in the Fourth Gospel*. Resources for Biblical Study 86. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016. Pp. xii-347. \$46.95.

The contributors of the present volume want to take seriously the idea that the Gospel of John is fundamentally a “powerful *story*” (p.1). Picking up literary examinations of the Fourth Gospel pioneered by Alan Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*), *How John Works* focuses on examining fifteen narrative components of the Fourth Gospel to calibrate and sharpen our reading of it: genre, style, time, space, point of view, plot, characterization, protagonist, imagery, scripture, rhetoric, persuasion, closure, audience, and culture.

Each essay begins with an educational and (sometimes quite) technical discussion of the literary feature in question prior to illustrating its interpretative significance for readings of the Gospel. Although some readers will find some of the technical portions difficult, others will appreciate the level of detail and scholarly care that has been taken to define the territory under examination. Yet others will perhaps discover rich possibilities for further academic research, for insights in this volume abound.

Since Alan Culpepper himself, as well as Andrew Byers, have recently offered excellent (and overwhelmingly positive) reviews of this volume’s content (see *Review of Biblical Literature* 07/2017), the present review will aim less to summarize all the chapters and more to illustrate the potential value of this volume for preachers and teachers in the church.

Persuasively arguing that the Fourth Gospel is influenced by the genre conventions of ancient drama, Harold Attridge reveals how the Fourth Evangelist’s dramatic construction powerfully serves in a variety of ways “to display and to invite transformative encounters with the crucified and resurrected Way, Truth, and Life” (p.22). Dan Nässelqvist examines the “plain,” “middle” and “grand” styles of writing that predominated “during the first centuries BCE and CE” (p.25), each of which had their own rhetorical functions (to prove, please, or sway). Listening to the sounds of sentences in the Fourth Gospel, for example, whether clashing or soft, can enable the careful reader to detect instances of “veiled or previously unknown irony” (p.35)—something attentive preachers may well want to do. Time in the Fourth Gospel, demonstrates Douglas Estes, is “warped”, so that “certain ‘massive’ events such as the crucifixion warp the rest of the narrative events toward it” (p.54). Susanne Luther examines the concept of narrative space, helpfully illuminating how “spatial oppositions infer nonspatial meaning” (p.63); Jesus’ trial before Pilate, for example, which shifts from “inside” to “outside”, invokes a plethora of nonspatial oppositions that ultimately disclose that “Jesus, who is accused on the outside stage is considered innocent on the inside stage” (p.74). Identifying the “five planes on which point of view is expressed in a narrative text: spatial, temporal, psychological, phraseological, and ideological” (p.81),

James Resseguie reflects on features of narrative like “retardation”, which seek to make the “well-known and overly familiar seem unfamiliar” in order, as it were, to “make the stone *stony*” again (pp. 87-8). Resseguie’s observation that “the changes in names, titles, and epithets—which are often saturated with meaning—are not to be ignored as a marker of point of view” (p.90), opens up some interesting interpretative insights, as in John 20, where Jesus calls Mary by a variety of different names and titles (see p.92). Employing A. J. Greimas’ actantial model for reading plot, Kasper Bro Larson talks about how “human beings ‘read for the plot’ to satisfy their desire for meaning” (p.97). His discussion of the pragmatic and cognitive dimensions of the Fourth Gospel’s plot, as well as how Greimas’ “four phases that the subject (main character) undergoes” (p.108)—viz., manipulation, competence, performance, and sanction—helps the reader better to understand the (sometimes confusing) role relations and dynamism of this Gospel. Christopher Skinner shows how “the characters of the Fourth Gospel create sympathy among the readers as they are continually pushed toward a decision about the identity of Jesus” (p. 121). In a piece that might be especially inspiring (and perhaps homiletically educational) for preachers assigned with a weekly communicative task, Mark Stibbe shows how the tectonic shift in contemporary storytelling from “telling” to “showing” is an original part of the genius of John’s Gospel, performed as it was originally—orally. Dorothy Lee’s discussion of the “tangled thicket” of imagery in the Fourth Gospel, with the image of the cross winding its way through the entire narrative, is a veritable feast for the preacher, and suggests not a few possibilities for how to preach shorter series from the Fourth Gospel. Rekha Chennattu discusses Scripture and rightly emphasizes that “the words of Jesus are understood as part of the ongoing revelation of God’s interventions in human history and are placed on par with Scripture” (p.186); critically, the Fourth Gospel shows that “Jesus brought to completion or perfection the entire Scripture for a covenant people that transcends the boundaries of Jewish traditions and history” (p.186). Suggesting the Fourth Gospel is influenced by ancient rhetoric techniques, Alicia Myers argues that “the gospel proclaims a message meant to convince its audience both of Jesus’s unique identity and the type of discipleship required to follow him” (203). Francis Maloney examines the notion of “closure” in John 20 and 21, concluding that the Fourth Gospel does indeed have two closings: the first (ch.20) designed to round off the evangelist’s aim throughout the Gospel to generate belief in Jesus; the second (ch.21) to answer specific questions that arose later within the Johannine community. Differentiating between original, extended, and contemporary aspects of audience, all perceived to exist *outside* the text, Edward Klink focuses *inwardly* on the *implied* audience of the Fourth Gospel, showing how each new generation of the implied reading/listening audience is confronted with Jesus’ seminal question, “What do you seek?”, and invited to “come and see” the Christ for themselves. Finally, Charles Hill argues that the Fourth Gospel was a

potent culture-shaping force throughout the first few centuries following its writing in a variety of areas.

Heartily commended.

Ed Gerber
Willoughby Christian Reformed Church
Langley, British Columbia

Chris Castaldo, *Justified in Christ: The Doctrines of Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Henry Newman and their Ecumenical Implications*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017. Pp. vii-213. \$27.66, paperback.

This well-written and deeply-research book by Chris Castaldo is a must-read for all pastor-theologians who care about both the doctrine of justification and the unity of the Church.

Justified in Christ is the perfect title for this book because it accurately reflects the doctrines of both Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Henry Newman. These are two rather brilliant choices to study for several reasons. Vermigli is an Italian hero of the Protestant Reformation, but less familiar to many Reformed Protestants than Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, or Cranmer. He was also a convert from Roman Catholicism to the Protestant cause. Newman is well-known for his involvement in the Oxford Movement (or the “Tractarians” of the 19th century). He is also famous for converting to Roman Catholicism (originally from Evangelical Anglican to *via media* Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism). Less well-known is Newman’s understanding of the doctrine of justification, which was right at the heart of his movement toward Rome. Both men were learned theologians (both teaching at times in Oxford), and both articulated unique views on the doctrine of justification. Their views are unavoidably tied up with their historical situations and their personal journeys from one branch of the church to another. Having converted in opposite directions, and articulating unique views on justification, these two great figures make for an especially revealing study. And it is a study full of hope and possibility.

Castaldo organizes his work by analyzing the doctrines of each theologian separately, beginning with Vermigli (since he is historically prior). After examining Newman’s work, he brings the two into comparison. He notes common concerns and commitments between the two as well as their different commitments and conclusions. The final section explores the possibilities for ecumenical conversations between contemporary Reformed Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as some of the remaining challenges. This section includes an extensive engagement with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1999.

Castaldo highlights two key statements from Vermigli and Newman to illustrate and summarize their respective takes on the doctrine of justification. Vermigli argues, "Since no one has fulfilled or can fulfill (the command to love God with all heart, soul, and strength), it follows that we should fly to Christ through whom we may be justified by faith. After being justified, we may in some way begin to do what is commanded, albeit imperfectly" (45). Conversely, Newman argues, "Justification comes through the sacraments; is received by faith; consists in God's inward presence; and lives in obedience" (105). Between these two different definitions of the doctrine, a uniquely remarkable amount of overlap exists between the two figures.

There is so much good research in this book that the theological specialist will want to read slowly and dig into the footnotes. For the learned reader serving as a pastor-theologian, it may suffice to focus on Castaldo's take on the commonalities and differences between Vermigli's and Newman's understanding of justification. Their stories are fascinating, and contribute importantly to their formulations, but one can begin by looking at their conclusions before deciding to dig deeper.

What are those common concerns and commitments? Both are opposed to "works righteousness," or the idea that a person earns justification by inherent merit. Accordingly, both affirm "imputed righteousness" (forensically understood) as an essential aspect of justification. Both are also opposed to "cheap grace," or the idea that one can be right with God without conforming to holiness. Accordingly, both hold that forensic and actual/operative righteousness should be held together, and that both can be discussed under the rubric of justification. Vermigli believes that justification, regeneration, and sanctification are very closely related, almost like a "triple grace." At the same time, both theologians distinguish between forensic and actual/operative righteousness. For both Vermigli and Newman, these must go together, but can be distinguished, even if they define the distinction in different ways.

For common commitments, Vermigli and Newman both share an Augustinian view of sin. Humans are utterly lost and without hope apart from the grace of God. They also both affirm the believer's union with Christ as the key to obtaining all benefits of salvation, especially justification. Relatedly, both affirm the need for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that believers must be transformed to produce good works. Taken all together, Vermigli and Newman both hold that justification includes a "two-fold righteousness" (*duplex iustitia*). This means both imputed and actual righteousness go together as part of one doctrine, even if the relationship between the two differs somewhat between the two men. Both believe in free pardon and true renovation of the character.

Despite all these commonalities, some important differences remain. One is Newman's insistence on the instrumental value of the sacraments for the giving/receiving of justification. This corresponds to his view of the church as an objective body, determined by baptism (and baptismal regeneration). They also differ on the idea of *sola fide*. For Vermigli, faith

is the only instrument for laying hold of justification. But Newman sees faith as just one of several things needed for justifying righteousness, along with the sacraments, love, and obedience. They disagree on the formal cause of justification. For Vermigli, it is the imputed righteousness of Christ. For Newman, it is divine indwelling. This divine indwelling is an “uncreated grace,” because it is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, this indwelling is righteous indeed, and makes the believer righteous in character. Surprisingly, they differ on the idea of perseverance. For Vermigli, perseverance in faith is a natural and logical result of imputation. But Newman understands justification as something that can increase or decline in a person. In fact, it can even be lost when a person sins. Persons can be restored, but this isn’t automatic. They must seek to be justified again. This is surprising because one might think that an objective, sacrament-based notion of justification, that even includes an element of imputed righteousness, would lead to a strong belief in a fixed and permanent justification. Lastly, Vermigli and Newman disagree on the notion of merit. For Vermigli, our righteous actions are the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work, and will receive reward, but they are never meritorious in terms of putting God in one’s debt. Newman believed that good works could be genuinely meritorious. The works are “real” in the sense that they come from the person, even if the renovation of a person comes from God.

Castaldo has done us all a great service by bringing Vermigli and Newman into conversation, as it were, to probe the possibilities for further ecumenical conversations on justification, and to highlight the remaining challenges. I recommend this work to all who wish to better understand both the Reformed Protestant and the Roman Catholic doctrines of justification. You will learn more about both in this book. Even if you are a working theologian or learned pastor, you will learn a lot here. The story of justification is not as clear, cut and dried as it is sometimes portrayed (i.e., “This is what Catholics believe... this is what Protestants believe”). There are inaccuracies and caricatures present in churches and seminaries. The whole discussion cannot be reduced simply to Luther and Calvin on one side (and even they are not identical!) and the Council of Trent on the other. It is important to take these things seriously because this doctrine has re-emerged as an important topic of discussion, and there is some confusion in our churches.

Given that we are approaching the 500th year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and given that contemporary global challenges are pushing Nicene-orthodox Christians to reconsider their relationships to one another amidst growing adversity and opposition, this book could not be more timely. We need to engage in these discussions deeply, so that we can work together and love and support one another as Christians of different convictions. Castaldo has provided us with a model for how to study and learn from various theological voices, and then how to assess their value and relevance for the current moment. I highly recommend this book, and especially commend it to those who are eager to understand the doctrine of justification (for both devotional and pastoral reasons) and

for those who might think they already know all there is to know about it. Vermigli and Newman will surprise you.

Rev. Jonathan Huggins
Berry College
Rome, GA

Douglas A. Sweeney. *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 391 pp. \$74.00.

Jonathan Edwards has long been recognized for his contribution to theology and the spiritual life in the Protestant Reformed church in America, but Douglas Sweeney suggests that his contribution to the exegesis of Scripture is just as significant a contribution, yet largely ignored. *Edwards the Exegete* is Sweeney's attempt to introduce, explain, and even promote the exegetical presuppositions and practices of Jonathan Edwards. Sweeney divides the book into five parts (with two chapters each) that cover key aspects of Edwards' exegetical presuppositions, principles, and practices. A brief summary of Sweeney's description of the most significant aspects of Edwards' exegesis is in order.

First, Edwards was driven and directed, according to Sweeney, by a robust doctrine of Scripture (ch. 2). Not only does this mean the Bible is to be taken more seriously than any other book, but also that the Bible should be interpreted according to itself primarily. In Edwards' words, the Bible "is more sufficient for itself by far than any other book. Both the use and force of its own phrases is more fully learned from the Scriptures themselves, and also the customs and state of things on which interpretation mainly depends" (p. 41). Edwards was even hesitant to rely on ancient background material—the "holy grail" of contemporary exegesis (p. 42), since it might misdirect the reading of a text that Scripture itself would direct elsewhere.

Second, because of the unique nature of Scripture, its two-canon form is not only significant but also harmoniously interrelated (ch. 3). As Sweeney explains regarding Edwards' canonical perspective, "God designed the Word as a symphony, a single body of work with themes that do involve dissonance, crisis, and suspense, but resolve in glorious harmony for those who hear the end" (p. 57). This allowed Edwards to perform variations of a single theme in different parts of Scripture. Sweeney paints a beautiful picture of the canonically-expressed passion of Edwards: "He had a way of weaving canonical webs more quickly than the most industrious spider spins her craft" (p. 90). Edwards' canonical exegesis forced him not to limit the meaning of a particular text to the understanding of the historical author rather than the divine author. "If exponents of the canon kept themselves within the purview of the penmen of its parts, they would not perceive the harmony of the Old and New Testament" (p. 66). Though he never wrote one, Edwards' was

working from a “comprehensive biblical theology” (p. 74) in everything he did in Scripture.

Third, if the canonical form of Scripture is significant, so is its Christological focus (chs. 5 and 7). For Edwards, the “tragicomic story was the Bible’s main theme..., and Christ, the Messiah, was the Bible’s main subject” (p. 97). The Bible is overflowing with the gospel of Jesus Christ and “the overarching story of redemption in and through the secular world” (p. 138), and for this reason a proper reading of the Bible was Christological from start to finish. As Sweeney explains, with many of his contemporaries, “Edwards seemed to find Christ under every biblical rock, in every biblical nook and cranny—an obsession, many would say today, that carried him away” (p. 111). But in Sweeney’s view, Edwards was simply being consistent with the true subject matter of the Bible. For him, the entire canon “hangs together by the providence of God on the person and work of Christ” (p. 125).

Finally, Edwards, according to Sweeney, made the goal of his exegesis of Scripture Christian discipleship and human flourishing (ch. 9). Edwards the Exegete was first and foremost “a clergyman and teacher” (p. 188). Exegesis was not a disciplinary end in itself, but a path leading to theological formulation in doctrine and practice. Proof of this is how just under half—or forty percent, to be exact—of Edwards’ sermon manuscripts were spent on application (p. 194). For Edwards, the truth of Scripture is not simply known, it is lived out, “showing the goodness, truth, and beauty of the Bible in the world” (p. 201).

Sweeney has provided both the academy and the church with a rich introduction and explanation of the interpretive method of Jonathan Edwards. This exegetical biography, if it can be described that way, provides a beautiful portrait of an exegesis that is robustly biblical, Christological, canonical, and pastoral. It presents Edwards not as a scientist of the text but a shepherd of the church; and it models the kind of exegesis that is, or should be, comfortably at home in the church. This is not to deny or ignore the two-and-a-half centuries that separate the contemporary exegete from Edwards, but to exhort a rejuvenated exegesis that springs from an elevated doctrine of Scripture and the gospel. If nothing else, Sweeney has reminded the modern exegete, the pastor, that the exegetical task belongs first and foremost to the church, and that two centuries of the all-encompassing approach of the academy, with the “science-based” universities coming to life shortly after Edwards’ death, cannot deny or erase that the Bible is the church’s book. The Bible is not like any other book, and an appropriate exegetical method must align with its divine author and purpose. As Sweeney suggests, “to those who dare to hope that God is speaking in the Scriptures, Edwards may have something yet to offer that can help” (pp. 222-23).

Sweeney’s analysis of the major aspects of Edwards’ exegesis, combined with several key and often extended examples from his over 1,200 sermons or pages from notes, provides a rich resource for numerous academic disciplines—not only for both theological and biblical studies, but also for practical theology. As significant as this contribution is, however, it is more like a foray into an important topic that still requires more workers and

writers to explore fully Edwards' massive exegetical sermons and notes. We might even describe this monograph as a reconnaissance mission that helps establish Edwards' exegesis as important and necessary to continue exploring as the theology it produces. This is not to say that Sweeney failed in his task. It is to say, rather, that more work is needed, especially work that will engage with more specific aspects of contemporary exegesis in light of the exegesis of Edwards. Sweeney himself suggests as much in his closing sentence: "Time will tell, some expect, that the present-day renaissance of interest in theological exegesis of Scripture will enable us to make good on Edwards' biblical writings, recovering his tools while avoiding his mistakes" (p. 223). The contemporary church does seem to be on a quest to reclaim a theological exegesis of the Word of God, and it would be foolish not to seek the wisdom of Edwards, a pastor-theologian who offers the church "a learned and creative model of biblical exposition that is critical and edifying, historical and spiritual" (p. 223). Hopefully, like Edwards' view of the goal of exegesis, Sweeney's contribution is not an end in itself, but a forged path leading to more faithful and fruitful exegesis of the Bible.

Edward W. Klink III
 Hope Evangelical Free Church
 Roscoe, Illinois

Jeff Hubing. *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11-17*. Bloomsbury T&T Clark: London, 2015. 282 pp. HB \$114; PB \$39.95.

What is the role and function of Galatians 6:11-17? Most interpreters take these verses as the closing of the letter. In *Crucifixion and New Creation*, Jeff Hubing challenges that consensus to shed fresh light on these verses and on the letter as a whole. Hubing is a fellow of the Center for Pastor Theologians, President and Professor of Practical Theology at FIRE School of Ministry and Co-pastor of Cross Culture Church, both in Chicago. Throughout *Crucifixion and New Creation* Hubing argues that 6:11-17 is part of the letter body, not the letter closing. To be more precise, he makes the case that the passage is the closing to the letter-body, and thus the climax of Paul's major argument. With this careful study, he shows that the argument of Galatians is deeply concerned not only with theology but also with the practices entailed in following Jesus.

After an introduction that previews the argument and justifies the study, the book proceeds with an analysis of scholarly work on the passage in question. Hubing finds the majority view (i.e., that Galatians 6:11-17 is the letter closing) is based generally on the observation that Paul has taken over writing from the amanuensis, a move understood to identify the close of the letter (6:11). This framework has led interpreters to see 6:11-17 (along with 6:18) as a summary of the major points already made in the letter. Hubing argues, however, that these studies have not adequately

analyzed Galatians in light of Paul's other letters or ancient epistolary convention. When Galatians is read alongside the Greek common letter tradition, Hubing finds that 6:11-17 has no elements in common with examples of other letter-closings. How then should these verses be taken?

Hubing's answer is that when Paul indicates he has begun writing with his own hand, he is not signaling the end of the letter but the importance of what he is about to write. Further, since there is no clear evidence that these verses are part of the letter-closing, we have room for alternative proposals. Hubing argues that 6:11-17 is the closing of the letter-body, and he makes the case by comparing them to examples in the Greek common letter tradition. Hubing argues for three features of Galatians 6:11-17 that reflect body-closing convention, even if they have been modified by Paul: (1) Paul uses a formula that indicates his motivation for writing (6:11); (2) he includes a conditional clause that conveys a threat (6:16); and (3) he includes an expression of responsibility with an implied warning (6:17). Hubing concludes that 6:11-17 has far more in common with the body-closings in Greek letters than it does the letter-closings. This creates a fresh framework and new possibilities for considering the function of these verses.

Hubing argues that 6:11-17 functions in two key ways. First, it brings the argument of Galatians to its logical end. Second, it prepares the way for further communication between author and recipients. It does not simply summarize the major points of the letter. Instead, it introduces new material that brings Paul's persuasive efforts to their conclusion. In particular, it provides information about the motivations of the agitators. Paul thinks they are cowards attempting to avoid suffering and persecution as followers of Christ. Their insistence on circumcision provides a basis for boasting in the flesh. This creates a stark contrast between the agitators and Paul. They boast in the flesh. Paul boasts in Christ. This distinction provides the recipients with a clear set of options for the future. They can continue with Paul, or they can go along with the agitators. Paul thus concludes the main argument of the letter-body by challenging the recipients to decide where they will place their loyalties, and the way he makes the challenge reveals the high stakes.

This approach also draws attention to the role of suffering and persecution in Galatians. Paul sees his sufferings as a mark of his closeness to Christ. His willingness to embrace suffering demonstrates the purity of his motives. In contrast, the agitators are motivated by avoiding suffering. The difference between Paul and his opponents is not simply a matter of theology; it is a matter of practice. And the importance of the question is highlighted by its place at the climax of the letter-body: how will followers of Jesus behave when the potential for persecution arises? This is where the book will appeal to the broader ecclesial community. Hubing writes from a North American ministry context where being identified as a Christian does not typically result in bodily harm. Admittedly, theological appropriation of Paul's argument to present-day contexts goes beyond the historical argument made in this study. Nevertheless, an ecclesially-minded reader will naturally consider the question. How

should believers in a generally comfortable Christian context relate to Paul's positive attitude toward sharing in the sufferings of Christ?

All in all, Hubing makes a worthy contribution to the academic study of Paul in general and Galatians in particular. He has ably shown that Galatians 6:11-17 is not the summative letter-closing that most interpreters have thought. Instead, it is the climax of Paul's argument. This approach yields fresh insights into Paul's relationship to the recipients and his attitude toward his opponents. The book is likely to be of most use to graduate students and scholars of Paul. Nevertheless, pastors and theologically-minded lay persons will find some features of interest as well.

Matt O'Reilly
St. Mark United Methodist Church
Mobile, AL

Gregg Allison and Chris Castaldo. *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants After 500 Years*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 171 pp. \$16.99.

The 500 year anniversary of Martin Luther's *95 Theses* has brought a renewed interest in studies and questions associated with the Protestant Reformation. Not least of these is whether the Reformation has reached its shelf life or whether its children should continue on in protest against the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

Gregg Allison and Chris Castaldo, who have each previously published works related to Catholicism, tackle this question in their recent *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants After 500 Years*. The ability to answer the question of whether the Reformation maintains any continued relevance is contingent on one's knowledge of the theological differences that led the Reformers to protest, and whether those differences continue to maintain any significance. As the authors state, "We cannot judge whether it is finished, of course, unless we understand how it began" (p. 15).

However, the goal of Allison and Castaldo is not so much as to provide a history lesson, (although there are elements of relevant historical information), but to provide an overview of the theological framework that unites and divides Protestants and Catholics. This element of uniting and dividing is what gives the book its primary value. To be simplistic, Protestants can be divided into three broad categories on the question of the current relationship between Protestants and the RCC (p. 139).

There are those that seek to declare that the Reformation is over and any differences between Protestants and the RCC are too minimal to warrant any formal separation. On the other side are those that seek to mimic Luther and Calvin's posture toward the RCC in belief that she represents the antichrist and, therefore, "adopt an adverbial posture and

avoid constructive engagement” (p. 139). However, in the middle are a host of Protestants that are simply unsure of how to articulate a more nuanced position. On discussions related to the Trinity there is unanimity, yet great unease when unpacking how one is justified before God.

It is to this middle group that Allison and Castaldo’s work will find its greatest appeal. The authors provide a clear description of the theology that unites and divides Protestants and Catholics throughout their work. They accomplish this by avoiding bombastic language that often suffers “from selective quotation[s] without regard to official documents” (p. 31). Instead, Allison and Castaldo offer descriptive analysis of ten areas where Protestants and Catholics stand together and the major areas where they diverge in their teaching.

This framework allows the authors to hold a posture of grace and charity toward the RCC, yet also clarity where important disagreements remain. There is encouragement, according to the authors, in the movement from Rome on issues related to salvation and justification. With Vatican II the RCC now affirms Protestants can be saved outside of the RCC, although to be fair, the same is said for sincere Muslims and atheists (p. 144). In regard to justification, Allison and Castaldo see updates to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that include fragrances of Christ’s imputed righteousness as a significant point of encouragement (pp. 143-147).

The final verdict for the authors as it relates to the question of whether it is time to close the curtain on the Reformation is a “no, but”. There is recognition of the “development of mutual awareness” and occurrences of “selective collaboration”, yet, “unless the Catholic Church undergoes radical reform according to Scripture the Reformation will necessarily continue” (p. 151).

No doubt, some will argue the authors were too generous toward Catholic teaching, while others will say they were not generous enough. Even if one disagrees with the authors’ conclusion, the benefit of the book remains because of the clarity it offers in describing where there is agreement and disagreement between the two.

One reason for the likely diversity of responses is the complexity of a work like this. Although Allison and Castaldo presume to speak for Protestants, the innumerable denominations and split offs from the Reformation churches are a testament to the reality that contemporary Protestants do not speak with one voice on the major issues addressed in the book. Because of this, a more accurate sub-title would be *What Unites and Divides Catholics and Evangelicals*. However, the reality is even evangelicals do not speak with one voice on this question.

While most evangelicals will agree that biblical fidelity and necessity of gospel clarity push the Reformation onward, one hopeful takeaway for readers is that the goal of the Reformation should not and cannot be indefinite protest against Rome. As the authors make clear, real doctrinal differences remain and these differences are significant enough to remain

Protestants. However, Christ and the unity of his church body demands that we acknowledge separation cannot be our final resting place.

Cory Wilson
City Church
Cleveland, OH

Edward W. Klink III. *John*. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 971pp.

Edward Klink's major new commentary on the Gospel of John advocates and advances, explicitly and from first to last, a confessional approach to the Gospel. There are numerous helpful exegetical insights throughout (e.g., the identification of seven formal dialogues in the first half of the Gospel; the distinguishing of an "historical story" and a "cosmological story" within the Gospel's plot; the Old Testament background to Jesus' "turning" in John 1:38), but the commentary's thoroughly worked out confessional approach is its main contribution to Johannine studies.

In a long (53pp), important, and hermeneutically sophisticated introduction, Klink distinguishes critical and confessional approaches to the biblical text, arguing that proper biblical interpretation requires clarity on the approach being pursued: "the exploration of what this Gospel means cannot begin until we have explained what this Gospel is, for interpretation is guided by the nature of its object" (p. 24). Importantly, the confessional approach recognizes both the divine identity of the Gospel of John as Christian Scripture and the "full historicity" of the biblical text (p. 24). The confessional approach is, in Klink's view, the only correct approach. "Not to treat this Gospel as Scripture is itself a form of eisegesis, and it is a disobedient hearing of the (canonical) text's own claim and of the God by whom it was authored" (p. 25).

Interpreting John's Gospel from a confessional perspective requires, among other things, understanding it within the larger canon of Scripture, since it was always intended by God to be read that way. The historical and canonical contexts of John's Gospel function "symphonically to communicate the intended fullness of the Word of God" (p. 28). Because the Gospel is divinely authored, it is also necessary to relate it to eternal theological truths (such as the Trinity), as embodied in the historic creeds of the church. This yields a method of interpretation in which the Gospel is "read and applied by both exegetical and dogmatic reasoning" (p. 33). The text of the Gospel itself, as opposed to the historical events narrated by the text, is the locus of authoritative revelation, since the text combines the narration of the events and their correct interpretation (p. 34). Therefore, the commentary-proper focuses on interpreting the text of the Gospel itself. Reconstructing historical events and understanding how events described in John's Gospel fit with events described in the other

canonical gospels are matters of apologetics, not interpretation *per se*. They are addressed in the commentary because of their pastoral relevance to readers (for the record, Klink argues for two temple cleansings, and for compatibility between John and the Synoptics concerning the date of the Last Supper and crucifixion).

The major achievement of the commentary is its working out of the confessional approach in a detailed, passage-by-passage exegesis of the entire Gospel. For example, when Klink discusses the meaning of “lamb of God” in John 1:29, he opts for a meaning that includes John the Baptist’s frame of reference as well as the full canonical context. This allows “lamb of God” to be understood ultimately in light of the Apostle Paul’s teaching on the sacrifice of Christ. Klink’s approach also allows him to have his cake and eat it too regarding the debated Eucharistic imagery of John 6. The imagery clearly alludes to the manna of the wilderness wanderings, but also makes “impressions” that “reverberate across the entire canon,” including New Testament Eucharistic passages. Other examples of Klink’s confessional approach include his discussion of the eternal generation of the Son in the course of an exegesis of John 1, and the development of a Trinitarian theology of faith, and a discussion of election, in the course of his exegesis of John 6.

Klink rightly argues against the common 20th century scholarly approach of reconstructing a “Johannine community” from the text of the Gospel itself. Rather, the Gospel was “intended for a broad readership and was intended to cooperate with the general witness of early Christianity” (p. 65). According to Klink, John’s Gospel was written in the first century, by John the son of Zebedee. All twenty-one chapters were part of the original Gospel, which John wrote “to explain Jesus to the reader” (p. 883) in the hopes that he or she would believe in Jesus Christ. The Gospel is an invitation to “participate in God” by becoming part of his family and joining in his mission to the world. Because it is an invitation, “not to respond to the Gospel is a form of rebellion, a rejection of the living voice of God” (p. 886). John’s Gospel understands there to be continuity between the old and new covenants, with God’s people understood as one “recreated” people, inclusive of Jew and Gentile. The old covenant brought grace, but the grace of the new covenant has brought grace to its “ultimate and final expression” (p. 116). The new covenant is, in fact, “grace in place of grace” (John 1:16).

I am not persuaded by every exegetical argument of the commentary. For example, I am not sure *ginomai* in John 1 carries as much weight as is suggested, and I do not think the full extent of the exegetical debate in John 6 is recognized. There’s also a potential concern that the rather in-depth introduction, which is important for articulating the commentary’s main contribution (its confessional approach), will nonetheless be very technically demanding for many pastors (the primary audience for this commentary series). But this is an outstanding commentary, which will serve the Church well. Klink’s dual identity as a scholar and pastor is reflected throughout, not least in his use of rich and memorable language (e.g., “just as the Gospel’s prologue serves to *lift* the reader...so the Gospel’s epilogue serves to *land* the reader,” p. 893). I’m particularly

grateful for this commentary's methodological rigor, attentiveness to the text, clear and elegant style, and manifest devotion to the Jesus of whom the Gospel speaks.

Stephen Witmer
Pepperell Christian Fellowship
Pepperell, Massachusetts

