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Foundations Theological Journal

Foundations is an international journal of evangelical theology published in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics, and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry. Its particular focus is the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical truth and evangelical ecumenism. It has been published by Affinity (formerly The British Evangelical Council) from its inception as a print journal. It became a digital journal in April 2011. The views expressed in the articles published in Foundations do not necessarily represent the views of Affinity or its partners although all content must be within the bounds of the Affinity Doctrinal Basis.

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EDITORIAL

Test all things, hold fast what is good. (1 Thess 5:21, NKJV)

One of the roles that I hope Foundations can fulfil is to provide a forum for rigorous theological debate and interaction on areas where there will be disagreements among the broad constituency that Foundations serves. All articles must, of course, remain within the bounds of the doctrinal basis of Affinity.[1] But within that agreed perimeter this academic journal provides an outlet for discussion and refinement of views that will hopefully lead us together to that growth that we all desire "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). To that end, this issue features articles that continue past debates and present views which I find fundamentally unpersuasive. But presenting these things and facilitating further discussion can only be of benefit.

The first article in this edition looks at the meaning of the name Christian, against the background of cultural Christianity and trends in ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue. Leonardo De Chirico urges us to consider first the biblical definition of Christian, and then with that in mind finds either cultural or inter-faith lenses of viewing Christianity severely wanting. Whilst cultural Christianity is retreating, there are still significant pockets of society where Christianity is thought of and defined culturally. And, more broadly, we cannot escape the fact that the public religious leaders of our age, more or less, are committed to inter-faith dialogue, with its associated emptying of the name of Christian of any real meaning. Given this, De Chirico's call back to the biblical (and evangelical) understanding of Christian (and Christianity!) is helpful.

The second article speaks to a similar topic. How do we understand the name of God in evangelistic outreach to those of other faiths, in particular to those committed to Islam? A previous article in the Autumn 2019 edition of Foundations (with which I agree), entitled, "The Same God: Did Paul Claim the Athenians Worshipped Yahweh?" argued that we should not say that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.[2] In this edition, Duncan Peters, a Free Church of Scotland minister, takes issue with this. Rev. Peters' article is very clear in what he is not affirming:

> *I do not believe that anyone can be saved through Islam… People can only be saved through Jesus Christ. My heart's desire and prayer for Muslims is that they come to faith in Jesus Christ and experience salvation through him… I do not believe that Muslim and Christian views of God are more or less the same, or that the differences are minor and unimportant… I use 'worship' in the sense of a human activity that is directed towards God. Not all worship is acceptable to God, as Isaiah 29:13 indicates… Indeed, as the Lord Jesus said, the only way to the Father is through him (John 14:6).*

[1] https://www.affinity.org.uk/Affinity%20Doctrinal%20Basis%201203.pdf

[2] https://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-77-article-5-the-same-goddid-paul-claim-the-athenians-worshipped-yahweh

Nevertheless, Rev. Peters argues that it is important missiologically to build connections by not rejecting the "same God" language. He states, "We create an enormous barrier to communication if our starting point is, 'You Muslims are worshipping a different god from the God we worship. We worship the true God; you are therefore worshipping an idol, or something that doesn't exist.'" Instead, it is better to "to start with the truth Muslims already have about God and use this to build a bridge for communicating Biblical teaching about God, correcting wrong ideas, and developing and bringing to focus indistinct ideas." Rev. Peters' article argues this is the scriptural apologetic method. Whilst I find the arguments unpersuasive, Rev. Peters clearly speaks from within a robustly evangelical framework, and from years of practical ministry outreach to Muslims. His voice, therefore, is an important one to listen to, even if we end up disagreeing.

The third article relates to our present condition as a society. As we increasingly live in a society where traditional Christian morality, particularly relating to sexuality, is viewed not simply as outdated but harmful, one important question is, how did we get here? How did the transition in societal views occur? Was the change sudden, or is it a change that has been long in the making? One persuasive voice that has been seeking to provide answers is Professor Carl Trueman, currently of Grove City College. Dr Trueman has in print, and in lectures, outlined his understanding of how we have arrived where we have today. One important figure in Dr Trueman's historiography is "the other Genevan", Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A lecture focusing on the influence of Rousseau, delivered at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, has drawn a response from Stephen Clark, former Chairman of the Affinity Theological Study Conference and a retired pastor from Wales (now residing in sunnier climes!). Clark argues that the influence of Rousseau is overstated, that his thought is inimical to present day ideas in important respects, and that, above all, we need a more theological explanation of why society is as it is. I remain profoundly indebted to Trueman's historical work, however, many of the points Clark makes are worthy of ongoing reflection.

The fourth article focuses on Herman Dooyerweerd and his "Christian philosophy". With the recent revival of interest in neo-Calvinism, it is worth considering the broad spectrum of thinkers in this constituency. Steve Bishop is a sympathetic exponent of Dooyerweerd's thought and presents well his perspectives and his idea of "Reformational philosophy". With a renewed interest in our theological circles in reformed scholasticism and Thomism, the philosophical underpinnings of the thought of Dooyerweerd has come under criticism. It is therefore likely that many will not accept the position Bishop sets forth. Again, however, it is the role of Foundations to facilitate this kind of dialogue.

The articles in this edition conclude with a helpful exchange between Robert Letham and Stephen Clark. Professor Letham responds to a review of his *Systematic Theology* by Clark in an earlier edition of Foundations.[3] He focuses on the "respective priorities to be accorded to the individual and the corporate," with Letham emphasising the corporate and Clark the individual. Letham helpfully outlines his position on theological method and the implications of that for his limited treatment of certain recent theological trends, the role of the corporate

[3] https://www.affinity.org.uk/foundations-issues/issue-80

and the sacraments. Whilst, in the historical terms Letham concludes his review with, "I am more New Side than Old Side," the emphases Letham wants to see re-accented are, I think, tremendously important. Stephen Clark replies in the spirit of an old friend, noting where he agrees, where he thinks further dialogue is required and where he still disagrees. This is exactly the kind of discussion I hope to see in Foundations!

The journal concludes with a number of important book reviews.

I trust and pray this edition will be of use to us as churches and cause us to examine the scriptures on these matters.

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To Be Or Not To Be

Exercising Theological Stewardship of the Name Christian[i]

Leonardo De Chirico

Abstract

The word "Christian" can mean different things to different people and can be used in different contexts. After discussing the first biblical instance in which the name was used in Antioch (Acts 13:26), this article examines present-day evangelical parameters of what it means to be a Christian taking into account the broad evangelical consensus. It then compares and contrasts it to some adjectival descriptors such as "nominal" and "anonymous" (e.g. K. Rahner) as they are applied in the wider ecumenical world, finding them defective. As was the case in the New Testament Antioch, being a Christian means having heard, understood and received the gospel even today. In this sense, "nominal" and "anonymous" Christianity is a self-contradictory definition.

I. *Introduction*

My father recalls the time when he first met an evangelical Christian in his life. One day he was visited by a couple who were going door to door and distributing gospels in homes. At the doorstep, after greeting him and explaining what they were doing, they suddenly asked him: "Are you a Christian?". To this unexpected question, my father's answer was: "Yes, of course, I am Italian!"

For him being a Christian equalled to being Italian and vice versa. In his answer, a whole theology of Christian identity was implied. Being a Christian was associated with national identity rather than biblical markers. Spirituality and citizenship were blurred to the point of overlapping. It was through the reading of Scripture and the exposure to the Gospel that my father came to terms with the unsatisfactory nature of his answer. Was his Christian identity to be defined by him belonging to a culture and nation historically and culturally shaped by a form of Christianity and was there something radically different to be grappled with?

My father's answer highlights some of the concerns that need to be meditated upon in our theological reflection on nominalism. This paper will follow a kind of creation-fall-redemption movement. First, it will explore biblical parameters that provide the name "Christian" its composite yet distinct character taking the event that originated it as the springboard for our reflection. Second, it will briefly suggest some of the nuances surrounding the name that makes it prone to become a "mere" name. Third, it will adventure in advocating for the responsibility of being good stewards of the name "Christian" in our world that is characterized by a cacophonic plurality of meanings that often abuse it.

II. *The Perimeter of the Name*

"The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch" (Acts 11:26). This is the starting point of our reflection on some of the theological issues involved in using the designation "nominal" as it applies to Christians. Before the Antioch episode is even mentioned, the followers of Christ had been around for some time. Antioch is not the first Christian church mentioned in the book of Acts. Chronologically speaking, before Antioch there was Jerusalem, Samaria, Damascus, Lidda and Caesarea. In the geographic development of the church, the city of Antioch is touched and reached in the context of progressive dissemination of the gospel. Antioch, however, has a particularity among ancient Christian churches. It is a church that functions as a link between the initial expansive phase, marked by daring and unexpected movements, and the more intentional path of growth of the church. Antioch stands in between a somewhat forced mission and a more deliberate mission.

1. The Antiochene Blueprint

Acts chapter 11 tells how the gospel arrived in Antioch. In Antioch, for the first time, the disciples are called Christians. Other names available in the religious vocabulary are still useful but no longer fully adequate:[1] the church is composed of Jews and non-Jews and the Jewishness of the members of this group is no longer sufficient to describe it fairly. Since many of these disciples are not Jews – nor do they belong to another single group – ethnic markers are insufficient to describe these followers of Jesus. Moreover, the church in Antioch has a certain numerical size, such that it can no longer be dismissed as a phenomenon of a group of individuals fascinated by an obscure religious leader. As such, the name Christian denotes not so much the individual identity, but the social reality of a new composite community marked by a common faith in a common Lord.

In addition, the text tells us that meetings in Antioch were held regularly for a whole year giving the idea of continuity and stability in the community life. The Christians are described as having spiritual and communal identity markers over a prolonged length of time. It is after the observation that this community is relatively stable and taking residence in the city that their religious profile begins to emerge. With such identifiable and clear contours, it required lexical creativity to single them out. A new word is born: the disciples are therefore called "Christians". This word comes from the evidence of a phenomenon that can no longer be described with previously existing words. This new phenomenon cannot be described in opposition to something else but needs a new name to be properly identified in its own terms. The word "Christian" is not even given artificially, it arises from the evidence of the stabilisation of a new public identity. These people are Christians!

[1] John Stott rightly argues that "Luke has so far referred to them as 'disciples' (6:1), 'saints' (9:13), 'brethren' (1:16; 9:30), 'believers' (10:45), those 'being saved' (2:47) and the people 'of the way' (9:2). See J.R.W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Leicester: IVP, 1990), 205.

2. The Christ-like Shape of the Name

The contours of the new reality, of which the name "Christian" is a descriptor, deserve careful consideration if the theological reflection on nominalism is to be framed in biblical categories rather than just echoing historical, sociological and lexicographic elements.

First, the name Christian is associated with the condition and the challenges of being a "disciple". Disciple is the standard New Testament word indicating someone who follows the teaching and the example of a master. The disciple is not only one who is cognitively on the same page with the teacher but whose life is also spiritually and existentially identified with the master. Any sense of detached and superficial Christianity is therefore excluded. In calling people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, Christianity is a totalising religion, a call to embrace the path of the Master, to the point of identifying oneself with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (e.g. Romans 6:4). The word used in Acts 11:26 is plural, i.e. "disciples". One is not a disciple on their own. Disciples are called to be a community of followers. It is an all-embracing life program that one needs to pursue personally and in fellowship with other like-minded, fellow disciples. Christianity is therefore a radical faith in terms of its demands and expectations and a social faith at the very heart.

Second, the name Christian bears a pervasive reference to Christ. It is a lexical construction (*Christianoi*) and elaboration based on the name of Christ. The organic relationship between Christ and his followers is testified by the adaptation of the name of the latter to the personal name of the former. The name Christ is stretched to the point of becoming a descriptor of his disciples. The name of Christ is not duplicated and applied to mere replicas but elaborated into the new form "Christian" and associated with Christ's disciples. It is organically related to Christ, but at the same time provides space for followers of Christ to be united with him yet be different from him. So deep is the identification between Christ and the Christians that his followers bearing his name are people who can affirm together with the apostle Paul: "for to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). Christ defines their identity so pervasively that his name is stamped on their name.

On the whole, then, it seems that the naming of these disciples of Christ does not follow a shallow or superficial definition of the phenomenon. It is rather the contrary. It involves the whole of life: the belief system associated with the message of Christ, the ethical behaviour that stems from the example of Christ and belonging to the community of the followers of Christ. Belief, behaviour, and belonging form its programmatic meaning; these three dimensions mark the content of the name Christian. In J.I. Packer's lucid summary, "being a Christian is a blend of doctrine, experience and practice. Head, heart and legs are all involved. Doctrine and experience without practice would turn me into a knowledgeable spiritual paralytic; experience and practice without doctrine would leave me a restless spiritual sleepwalker".[2]

[2] J.I. Packer, *I Want to Be a Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publ., 1977), p. 140.

3. Present-day Descriptors of the Name

As far as the generating event of the name is concerned, the word Christian is not an empty lexical box that can be arbitrarily filled according to various spiritual inclinations and preferred options. Though it is open to personal, ecclesial, and cultural embodiments, it retains a fundamental core that needs to be accepted as a "given" shaped by how the Bible intends it. This "givenness" of the name forms the non-negotiable, biblically defined DNA of what it means to be a Christian.

Interweaving different biblical threads about the identity of being a Christian, the Lausanne Covenant (par. 4) puts its semantical range in the theological context of a pentagon figure. The name Christian is a space whose contours are:

- Commitment to the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord
- Repentance and reconciliation to God
- Acceptance of the cost of discipleship in following Christ, denying self, and taking up the cross.
- Incorporation into Christ's community, the local church
- Engaging in responsible service in the world for Christ.[3]

Wrapping up the elements highlighted in the Lausanne Covenant, to be a Christian is to be committed to the historical Jesus Christ (faith as *notitia*), as one's own personal Saviour and Lord (faith as *assensus*) in repentance and faith (faith as *fiducia*). It also has an inherent connection to discipleship and a cruciform, Christ-like life. It is quintessentially lived out within the Church and in the world in service and mission. These markers may vary in intensity and their overall balance. Christians may have different levels of awareness of their identity or different degrees of understanding of what it means to be a Christian. In their mutual interlocking, nonetheless, each of the markers calls the others into existence and is organically related to the whole.

Building on the foundations laid out at Lausanne, it is interesting to refer to how the 2010 Cape Town Commitment helps our discussion by focusing on the identification of the gospel and the gospel people who embrace it. Here is the significant portion of the document:

> *We love the assurance the gospel brings. Solely through trusting in Christ alone, we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit and are counted righteous in Christ before God. Being justified by faith we have peace with God and no longer face condemnation. We receive the forgiveness of our sins. We are born again into a living hope by sharing Christ's risen life. We are adopted as fellow heirs with Christ. We become citizens of God's covenant people, members of God's family and the place of God's dwelling. So by trusting in Christ, we have full assurance of salvation and eternal life, for our salvation ultimately depends, not on ourselves, but on the work of Christ and the promise of God. "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How we love the gospel's*

[3] See "The Lausanne Covenant" in J.D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice. A Comprehensive Reference Volume on World Evangelization* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publ., 1975), p. 4.

promise! God commands us to make known to all nations the truth of God's revelation and the gospel of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, calling all people to repentance, faith, baptism and obedient discipleship" (8.C).[4]

The standard evangelical view of what it means to be a Christian is rehearsed with its traditional emphasis on the "Christ alone" grounds of salvation and the calling to make the Gospel known to the whole world. The theme of Christian assurance is also evoked as stemming from it. The Church is contemplated as "covenant people", "God's family", and "the place of God's dwelling". This ensures the Christian message is not communicated with an overtly individualistic bent, but with an ecclesiological thrust. Quite remarkably for an evangelical document of this kind, "baptism" is also referred to as part of the calling to be extended to all nations. There is no hint of sacramental language, though. Even the position of baptism in the fourfold sequence is interesting in that it places baptism after repentance and faith, to allow an understanding of baptism as an ordinance that does not sacramentally cause repentance and faith but rather follows them. According to the Cape Town Commitment, it seems that Christians are those who are baptised having also gone through repentance and having believed the gospel. Baptism in itself cannot define who a Christian is. Contrary to Roman Catholic and ecumenical views whereby it is baptism that causes repentance and faith, Cape Town acknowledges the importance of baptism in the context of a personal response to the gospel.

III. *Approximations and Boundaries Around the Name*

The name Christian did not originate in a vacuum and was not left as an empty space for people to fill it in arbitrarily. It emerged as a descriptor of a specific spiritual, personal and communal reality marked by the identification of the followers of Jesus Christ with their Master. Having said that, in the NT the name Christian is never considered as an over-spiritualised ideal, nor an abstract concept. While it has a stable perimeter and a Christ-like shape, it is always connected with real people in the real world struggling to walk through the ups and downs of their Christian life.

1. Shades Around the Name

The Bible is fully aware that Christians live different approximations of the identity carried out in their name. Christians may be "weak" (Romans 14:1) or "strong" (Romans 15:1), thus indicating various degrees of spiritual strength and depth in living out the Christian life. Christians can live different stages and phases of their life: they can spiritually be "children" doing "childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11) and then becoming "men" (1 Corinthians 13:11) with more mature postures as far as their understanding of the faith is concerned. A childish Christian still depends on "milk", i.e. elementary teaching on the Word of God, whereas a

[4] *The Cape Town Commitment* (Peabody, MA Hendrickson, 2011). Online: http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment

mature one can be fed by "solid food" (Hebrews 5:12-13) in order to better discern good and evil. The state of spiritual childhood can also lead to "worldly", contentious and immature performances of the Christian life as opposed to spiritual ones which display the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Christians are urged to warn the idle, encourage the timid and help the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:15) because these conditions are real and well represented in the Church. People carrying the name "Christian" find themselves at different stages of maturity in their spiritual journey. This is the reason why each apostolic letter is replete with exhortations, admonitions and encouragements addressed to believers to move forward in the Christian life and away from dangerous pitfalls or regressive trends. While all Christians share the same positional status before God that allows them to be identified with Jesus Christ, all Christians bear witness and embody this identity in a variety of ways.

In his usually neat and profound language, John Stott provides a useful summary of how the biblical gospel gives rise to legal, positional dimensions received by the believer as a disciple of Christ as well as originating a renewal process leading to transformation and maturity. The gospel of salvation:

> *Denotes God's total plan for man, and it includes at least three phases. Phase one is our deliverance from the guilt and judgment of our sins, our free and full forgiveness, together with our reconciliation to God and our adoption as His children. Phase two is our progressive liberation from the downdrag of evil, beginning with our new birth into the family of God and continuing with our transformation by the Spirit of Christ into the image of Christ. Phase three is our final deliverance from the sin which lingers both in our fallen nature and in our social environment, when on the last day we shall be invested with new and glorious bodies and transferred to a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Further, these three phases, or tenses, of salvation (past, present and future) are associated in the New Testament with the three major events in the saving career of Jesus, His death, His resurrection and subsequent gift of the Spirit, and His return in power and glory. Paul calls them justification, sanctification and glorification.*[5]

From Stott's summary, the basis of Christianity appears to have a threefold significance: a legal dimension whereby the person is freed from the guilt of sin and justified by grace; a transformative dimension whereby the person experiences conversion into the new life and becomes part of the people of God; and an eschatological dimension whereby the effects of sin will be eventually wiped out and the shalom of God will reign forever. As far as the first dimension is concerned, it is an either/or condition that is received by grace alone through faith alone. It is the ground of the Christian life, the entry point into God's kingdom, and the threshold of salvation. As for sanctification, it is an ongoing process that leads to progressive approximations of Christian maturity. All Christians, already justified by faith alone and therefore covenantally Christians, are called to walk through the journey of growth and service.

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[5] John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist. The Basics of Belief* (Leicester: IVP, 1970, [2]1996) pp. 109-110.

This is all to say that while the name "Christian" can be associated with those who belong to Christ, having been justified and adopted by God, the name is not lived out in a one-size-fits-all human experience but encompasses different levels of personal appropriation and application of their identity as disciples of Jesus Christ. While justification marks the position, status and standing of the Christian before God, sanctification points to the renewal and progressive and gradual process that takes place in the life of the Christian. The former is characterised by the "hapax" adverb (once and for all, definitive) of God's work, and the latter is by the "mallon" adverb (evermore, ongoing).[6] The "dynamics of spiritual life"[7] reflect a wide range of possible situations in the Christian journey.

2. Crossing the Boundaries

The question that needs to be asked at this point is whether the phenomenon of "Nominal Christianity" falls theologically under the many approximations surrounding the Christian identity. If it is true that the name Christian is flexible enough to include varieties of Christian experiences, can it be stretched to the point of embracing "nominal" Christians too?

Simplistically put, nominal Christianity still retains the name "Christian" but implies a radical re-interpretation of its meaning. The signifier is still the same, but the signified is not. The heart of what it means to be a Christian is blurred to the point of being radically altered. Some of the defining features are replaced with other items that do not belong to the biblical core of its basic connotation. Nominal Christianity is a matter of being born in a given family or belonging to a cultural or religious context or having gone through some kind of Christian initiation process that has little if no impact on one's daily life. For nominal Christians being a Christian is only a "nominal" inference (i.e. superficial, remote, peripheral). They are Christian only by name, not in reality or practice, nor belief. They feel they "belong" to something associated with Christianity with various degrees of closeness/remoteness; what they actually "believe" and the way it is reflected in their lives is a much more complicated matter. In terms of the belief system, many of these "Christians" have a kind of "patchwork" and selective theology based on a self-made version of the Christian faith that does not square with the biblical witness; the same eclecticism is true as far as their moral vision and practice are concerned where rampant secularisation can be found in private and public life while retaining degrees of "religious" language or concern. More radically, these nominal Christians lack experiential engagement and spiritual participation in the biblical definition of what it means to be a Christian. They tend to lack any evidence of being disciples of Jesus in terms of the Antiochene blueprint.

Going back to my father's story, he considered himself a Christian because he belonged to a national and cultural community loosely associated with a form of Christianity inherited by

[6] On the *hapax* and *mallon* as defining categories for Evangelical theology, see John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999).

[7] To quote the title of a classic book on revival: R.F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life. An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979).

tradition, but not being a disciple of Jesus Christ in the biblical sense. He felt to be "Christian" was to belong to something without believing the gospel and striving to behave accordingly.

The definitions of what Nominal Christianity is may vary considerably and the complexity around these definitions should be fully appreciated. Here is how the Lausanne Occasional Paper N. 10 defines a nominal Christian:

> *A nominal Christian is a person who has not responded in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord. He is a Christian in name only. He may be very religious. He may be a practising or non-practising church member. He may give intellectual assent to basic Christian doctrines and claim to be a Christian. He may be faithful in attending liturgical rites and worship services, and be an active member involved in church affairs. But in spite of all this, he is still destined for eternal judgment (cf. Matt. 7:21-23, Jas. 2:19) because he has not committed his life to Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10)".*[8]

This definition helpfully lays out some important points to be taken into consideration as far as a theological analysis of it is concerned. According to this LOP, a "nominal" Christian is someone who has not yet gone through a personal conversion to Christ (i.e. repentance and faith). His/her allegiance to the name of Christ is still impersonal and remote. Christ may be an important figure but not the Lord and Saviour of their life. He/she may express various degrees of religiosity, even practising forms of Christian devotion and liturgical participation. Furthermore, they may even be active in a church body and contribute to its life. The point is that taken in themselves, a generic religiosity, a spurious spirituality, a formal membership in the Church (even in evangelical churches) and the involvement in its activities are not signs of the fact that biblical Christianity is activated and implemented. There is still a disjunction between belonging to a religious community and personally believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is lacking in a nominal Christian is the personal response to the Gospel that leads to authentic discipleship. The presence of some signs of inherited cultural religiosity is not in itself spiritual evidence of a regenerated life and therefore cannot be exchanged with Christianity according to the gospel.

IV. *Standing Critical Issues*

The name Christian can be stretched to the point of including different levels of appropriation of its core meaning but it needs to retain the definition already given to it by the Antiochene blueprint. Biblical Christianity, however flexible and adaptable it is, cannot be transformed into something radically different that keeps the name but alters its substance. In this final section, a series of critical points will be reviewed in attempting to highlight the basic difference between the Antiochene blueprint and its possible "religious" deviations.

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[8] *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics* (LOP 10, 1980) https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-10 .

1. The Cruciality of Conversion[9]

The theological understanding of the name "Christian" is characterised by the insistence on the personal need for salvation and the personal responsibility to respond to God's grace in repentance and faith. The Gospel is both an announcement of God's intervention to save and a summons to respond with faith. In David Bebbington's terms, "conversionism" (together with Biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism) captures the heart of evangelical Christianity in that it recognises the centrality of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ resulting in forgiveness of sin and a changed life.[10] The Reformation doctrine of salvation based on *Solus Christus* is matched with the Revivalist emphasis on the reality of personal conversion. Against the view that Evangelicalism is only a child of modernity, Stott is worth quoting when he argues that Evangelicalism is not "a new-fangled 'ism', a modern brand of Christianity, but an ancient form, indeed the original one".[11]

Jesus' injunction to Nicodemus "You must be born again" (John 3:7) becomes paramount for every man. Regeneration through conversion is the necessary threshold for salvation and therefore to be recognised as a Christian and is achieved by the Holy Spirit through the preaching and witness of the Gospel to which men respond in repentance and faith.[12] Salvation does not come from simply being born into a Christian family, nor from being part of a Christian environment. Not even being a formal member of a Christian church, nor having received a sacrament of Christian initiation earns salvation. It is not by merit, it is not by works, it is not by tradition, it is not by sacraments: it is by grace alone through conversion to Jesus Christ.

The personal experience of salvation ushers people into the Christian life. Reflecting on the centrality of conversion as far as an evangelical account of the initiation to the Christian faith, Holmes argues that "Evangelicals are those who preach the same gospel of punctiliar conversion and immediate assurance available through faith alone".[13] This is not to suggest, however, that there is a single pattern and timing of conversion. In this respect, Klaas Runia correctly says that "When it comes to the 'form' of conversion, there are some differences of opinion among evangelicals (is conversion instantaneous, so that one can mention time and place, or is it more in the nature of a process?) but generally Evangelicals do not prescribe a

[9] Here I use material already presented in my article *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: Evangelical Consensus in Dialogue with Roman Catholicism*, "Evangelical Review of Theology" 39:4 (2015) pp. 292-310.

[10] D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). On Bebbington's overall understanding of Evangelicalism, see the recent and helpful critical discussion in Michael A.G Haykin – Kenneth J. Stewart (edd.), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism. Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

[11] John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, cit., p. 33. In the same book, Stott argues that Evangelical Christianity is "theological", "biblical", "original" and "fundamental", pp. 27-46.

[12] There is a recent study on being "born again" by John Piper, *Finally Alive. What Happens When We Are Born Again* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2010).

[13] Stephen R. Holmes, *Evangelical Doctrine: Basis for Unity or Cause of Division?*, "Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology" 30:1 (2012) p. 64.

particular method or a particular manifestation. The emphasis is on the fact of conversion, not on its particular form".[14]

The fact of personal conversion is what makes the difference in answering the question: Who is a Christian and who is not? Most converted Christians can identify with the words of John Newton (1725-1807) who in his world-famous hymn Amazing Grace could write: "I once was lost, but now am found / Was blind but now I see". Personal stories may vary considerably, but they are all characterised by a personal conversion which can be recounted in a personal biography. Biblical Christianity according to the Antiochene blueprint is a conversionist religion and every Christian needs to be taught to always be ready to give her/his personal "testimony", i.e. an account of her/his conversion and personal walk with the Lord.

The objective message of the cross is the legacy of the *sola*, *solus* principles of the Reformation. Together with the personal experience of salvation, they form the foundation of much evangelical preaching of the Gospel, especially of those sermons that came out of the different revivals of post-Reformation history. Again, Packer and Oden are helpful here when they write that "Evangelicalism characteristically emphasizes the penal-substitutionary view of the cross and the radical reality of the Bible-taught, Spirit-wrought inward change, relational and directional, that makes a person a Christian (new birth, regeneration, conversion, faith, repentance, forgiveness, new creation, all in and through Jesus Christ)".[15] John 3:16 is an example of a Bible verse where the Gospel of God's salvation and man's responsibility to believe are masterfully condensed. Christians champion, memorise and extensively use John 3:16 in their spiritual pilgrimage and personal evangelism because it combines the love of God manifested in Christ and the response to it shown forth in personal faith.

Stemming from the Antiochene blueprint of Christianity, in the long trajectory of Church history, modern revivals have emphasised personal conversion as the necessary step towards salvation. The stress on conversion has also strongly influenced the evangelical preaching of the Gospel that invites people to repent from sin, believe in Jesus as personal Saviour and Lord and be saved, urging people to respond and to walk through a conversion experience. The "sinner's prayer" – "Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Saviour and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be" – captures an important feature of contemporary evangelical accounts of conversion and the expectations it produces.[16]

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[14] Klaas Runia, *What is Evangelical Theology?*, "Evangelical Review of Theology" 21:4 (1997) p. 299. See also David Wells, *Turning to God. Biblical Conversion in the Modern World* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989).

[15] James I. Packer – Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith. The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), p. 160.

[16] It should be noted that the worldview of the "sinner's prayer" is a topic of growing uneasiness in Evangelical circles. It is deemed to be too simplistic, too individualistic, too modernistic, too superficial, too close to Western cultural patterns of individual decision-making processes and far from other cultural patterns, etc. Having said all this and being aware of its weaknesses (see "Christianity Today"'s 2012 September editorial

In the 20th century, the global evangelistic ministry of Billy Graham well epitomised a variant of this inherent combination between the objective (the cross of Christ) and the subjective (personal conversion) sides of conversion. The basic threefold structure of Graham's message (i.e. the human problem; God's solution; the way forward), as it is exemplified in his widely circulated book *Peace With God*, reflects shared patterns of the evangelical way of understanding conversion.[17] The sheer fact that in his 60 year-long career Billy Graham has preached the Gospel live to more than 210 million people in 185 different countries of the world, and that it is estimated that nearly 3 million people have responded to Jesus Christ by faith, are in themselves remarkable markers of his evangelical zeal for spreading the message of Christianity being a conversionist religion. This is also recognised and respected by voices that advance legitimate criticism of various aspects of his ministry.[18]

The vocabulary of conversion is by no means exclusive to the Evangelical tradition. It belongs to the shared language of all versions of Christianity because it is a biblical word. The fact, though, is that evangelicals tend to understand conversion as a "hapax", a once and for all turning to God in repentance and faith, attaching to it a salvific dimension and assurance of salvation, other traditions tend to understand conversion as part of the on-going religious journey and a call for daily renewal. Nominal Christianity tends to be compatible with the latter. The centrality of conversion is what lies at the core of the Antiochene definition of Christianity but the "equivocal" meaning of conversion needs to be taken into consideration when addressing the issue of Nominal Christianity. A non-converted Christian is a contradiction in terms, but one needs to be clear about what conversion to Jesus Christ means and its effects on one's life.

2. Thresholds of Christianity

Reflection on conversion needs to be further stretched. Evangelicals tend to view conversion in relational categories whereby God saves lost sinners by reconciling them to himself by the work of Christ alone. The whole theological vocabulary of salvation is relational in focus and intent: regeneration (life language), justification (juridical language), adoption (familial

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http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/september/the-evangelical-jesus-prayer.html), the "sinner's prayer" is a "monument" of present-day Evangelical spirituality that needs to be grappled with.

[17] Billy Graham, *Peace with God*, 1953 and dozens of subsequent editions and reprints. Here is the structure of the book:

Part One: Assessing the situation

The Great Quest; The Indestructible Bible; What is God Like?; The Terrible Fact of Sin; Dealing with the Devil; The Despair of Loneliness; After Death-What?

Part Two: Advancing the Solution

Why Jesus Came; How and Where to Begin; What is Repentance?; What is Faith?; The Old and the New; How to Be Sure.

Part Three: Applying the Antidote

Enemies of the Christian; Guidelines for Christian Living; The Christian and the Church; Am I my Brother's Keeper?; Hope for the Future; Peace at Last; The Day After.

[18] Some of the criticism from "liberal" voices are found in Michael G. Long (ed.), *The Legacy of Billy Graham. Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

language), and conversion (the language of change). These are all pictures that depict the re-enacted relationship between God and man in different ways. Evangelicals find it difficult to think of salvation in sacramental terms. In the Evangelical understanding and experience of salvation, the sacraments are important, but not prominent. They are in the background, of course, as part of the God-given and Scripture-attested life of the church, but are not essential to salvation and therefore in defining who is a Christian and who is not.[19] The whole sacramental dimension of Christianity is "second without being secondary".[20]

To put it simply: no Evangelical would say that she is a Christian primarily because she has been baptised or because she is a regular participant in Communion services. The basic view of Christianity is that it is God's free gift, in spite of ourselves, through the work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection, and appropriated by faith. John Stott is again helpful here:

> *If there is no saving merit either in our good works or in our faith, there is no saving merit in the mere reception of the sacraments either… It is not by the mere outward administration of water in baptism that we are cleansed and receive the Spirit, nor by the mere gift of bread and wine in Communion that we feed on Christ crucified, but by faith in the promises of God thus visibly expressed, a faith which is itself meant to be illustrated in our humble, believing acceptance of these signs. But we must not confuse the signs with the promises which they signify. It is possible to receive the sign without receiving the promise, and also to receive the promise apart from receiving the sign".*[21]

The cross, not baptism nor the Eucharist, has centre-stage in the Evangelical horizon of the understanding of what Christianity is all about.[22] The *hapax* (once-and-for-all) significance of the cross is emphasised much more than the *hapax* of baptism or the *mallon* (more and more) aspects of the Eucharist.[23] Each Evangelical tradition has its own sacramentology, but it does not lie at the "centre" of their faith, nor does sacramental language define the grammar and vocabulary of the Evangelical understanding of what belongs to the core of being a Christian.

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[19] This aspect is well presented in the 1996 World Evangelical Fellowship document on Roman Catholicism: Paul Schrotenboer (ed.), *Roman Catholicism. A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), par. 8.

[20] Henri Blocher, "The Nature of Biblical Unity" in J.D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice. A Comprehensive Reference Volume on World Evangelization*, cit., p. 390. Here Blocher is talking about the sacrament of baptism but his argument can be extended to the sacraments as a whole. The *Cape Town Commitment*'s reference to "baptism" (8.C) being envisioned in Christian initiation in the context of our response to the gospel after faith and repentance is in line with this consideration of the sacraments being "second without being secondary". Having said that, Evangelicals who hold to infant baptism in line with the Westminster Directory of Public Worship believe infants "are Christians, and federally holy before baptism", albeit as these children age they need to respond appropriately in faith and repentance.

[21] John Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, cit., pp. 120-121.

[22] For more on this, see my *The Cross and the Eucharist: the Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "European Journal of Theology" VIII (1999/1) pp. 49-59.

[23] John Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, cit., pp. 34-38. I have applied this distinction in assessing the Roman Catholic language of "prolongation" of the Incarnation, "re-presentation" of the Eucharist and the "dynamic" time of Revelation: see *The Blurring of Time Distinctions in Roman Catholicism*, "Themelios" 29:2 (2004) pp. 40-46.

When Christians belonging to different traditions (Evangelical/Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, etc.) converse about who is a Christian and who is not, a relational theological mindset coupled with an experiential outlook is generally assumed by evangelicals whereas other traditions tend to encapsulate the initiation to the Christian faith in a sacramental theological mindset couched in a sense of belonging to the institutional church. Many words and expressions are the same, but their theological meanings are different because of the distance between their underlying, fundamental frameworks.

Linked to the Evangelical uneasiness towards sacramental language is the place of the Church in the account of what defines biblical Christianity. Being a Christian means having responded in repentance and faith to the gospel through the unique mediation of Christ: the church is a creature of this event. The emphasis is put on the direct relationship between the person saved and Christ, rather than on the Church as a corporate agent that administers grace.

Stemming from the once-and-for-all work of Christ and the firm promises of the Gospel, Evangelicals also experience a high degree of the assurance of salvation. Salvation is certain because of the juridical significance of justification and the eschatological trustworthiness of God's covenant promises. "If I die today, I will go to heaven" is the standard Evangelical language. Sometimes this attitude is perceived as arrogant and misplaced, yet it reflects the "grace alone", "faith alone" and "Christ alone" emphases of the Evangelical account of what it means to be a Christian. Indeed, salvation belongs to the Lord and those who receive it can be assured of it, despite their failures. Generally speaking, non-evangelical Christians find it difficult to appropriate this assurance, and this reluctance derives from a different way of approaching the question of what is the nature of Christianity and who is a Christian.

3. Are We All Anonymous Christians?

There is yet another critical side of the issue that deserves attention. In present-day ecumenical Christianity, heavily influenced by inter-faith dialogue and universalist trends of thought,[24] the whole discussion on Nominal Christianity has taken a new trajectory. The traditional understanding of the Christian explicitly belonging to the Christian Church and associated with Christian beliefs is undergoing significant transformation.

The Roman Catholic Church used to be committed to a strict and traditional interpretation of the dictum "extra ecclesiam nulla salus", i.e. outside of the Church there is no salvation. Those who did not sacramentally and juridically belong to the (Roman) Church, both non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians following other religions, were not considered to be Christians in the proper sense. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has significantly changed the understanding of the meaning of the dictum giving rise to a "gradualist" view of Christianity. The Vatican II documents deal with the change in status of non-Christian believers, just as non-Christian religions are seen in a new light. People who follow other

[24] For an introductory discussion on the different theologies of universalism, see J.I. Packer, "Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation" in K.S. Kantzer – C.F.H. Henry (edd.), *Evangelical Affirmations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

religions, even if far away from Christianity, are not considered away from Christ. They are instead in some measure "related" to Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 16) whether they wish it or not, whether they know it or not. If we take into account the fact that, again according to the council, Catholics enjoy a privileged relationship with Christ being "incorporated" with him (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 11,14,31), Roman Catholicism is seen as a completion, the achievement of aspirations that are already existing in non-Christian religions. The grace of God is already present in the nature of religions and the church, because of its special prerogatives, is the place where they can be exalted to their accomplishment. In this post-Vatican II view, every man and woman is somewhat mysteriously associated with the "Paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22). Clearly then, the catholicity of present-day Roman Catholicism, which is shared by much of ecumenical theology of religions, transcends the rather narrow boundaries of Christianity as defined by an explicit faith in Jesus Christ and a distinct journey of Christian discipleship.

Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" is an example of this position:

> *Therefore no matter what a man states in his conceptual, theoretical, and religious reflection, anyone who does not say in his heart, "there is no God" (like the "fool" in the psalm) but testifies to him by the radical acceptance of his being, is a believer… And anyone who has let himself be taken hold of by this grace can be called with every right an "anonymous Christian".*[25]

"Anonymous Christianity" means that a person lives in the grace of God and therefore is a Christian whether or not he is aware of it and attains salvation "outside of explicitly constituted Christianity".[26]

The nature of Christianity is today understood in a gradualist form giving rise to different shades of what it means to be a Christian. All people are included in one way or another in the circles of Christianity. On the contrary, Biblical Christianity as it is defined by the Antiochene blueprint maintains that this recent development may be trendy and politically correct but is fundamentally wrong. This gradualist interpretation of Christianity blurs the covenantal nature of the Christian faith and transforms it into a universalist religion that has little to do with the Antiochene blueprint.[27]

V. *Conclusion*

To be or not to be a Christian: this is the question ultimately posed by Nominal Christianity. The Lausanne Covenant is again worth quoting to bring the paper to a close:

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[25] Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, vol. 6, trans. Karl and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), p. 395.

[26] *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965–1982*, edited by P. Imhof and H. Biallowons (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1986), p. 207.

[27] This creates a fundamental barrier to dialogue amongst professedly Christian groups with substantially differing definitions of Christian, as it is rightly argued by Pietro Bolognesi, *Catholicisme romain et protestantisme évangélique : réconciliation, mais sous quelles conditions ?,* "La Revue Réformée" N° 263 (2012/4).

> *To proclaim Jesus as "the Saviour of the world" is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Saviour and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith.* (n. 3)

And again: "The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and to receive the good news" (n. 9).

Hearing, understanding and receiving the gospel, this is what defines who a Christian is. A nominal Christian may have come close to hearing, understanding and receiving it, but is still not a Christian because he has not believed it. Our task is to facilitate, under God, and in all ways possible, the proclamation and the witness of the gospel to the whole world.

About the Author

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[i] This paper was presented at the Lausanne Global Consultation on Nominal Christianity, Rome 14-18 March 2018.

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THE "SAME GOD" ISSUE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL TO MUSLIMS

Rev. Duncan Peters

Abstract

This article seeks to present a theological balance which both strongly affirms that as salvation is only in Jesus Christ no one can be saved through Islam (or indeed any other religious system) but at the same time argues that recent strong reactions to the language of Muslims and Christians worshipping (in some sense) the "same God" lack nuance and can hinder evangelistic dialogue with Muslims.

I. *Introduction*

Over the last decade or two, the question of whether Muslims and Christians worship the same God has reared its head at fairly frequent intervals. A recent contribution to the debate, published in March 2021, is Andy Bannister's *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?*[1] *Foundations 77 (November 2019)* included an article by Tim Dieppe, focussing on Paul's Areopagus address in Acts 17, which argued that Paul's speech cannot be used to support the position that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Many others from a conservative evangelical theological background dealing with this issue respond in the negative, arguing that Muslims and Christians do not worship the same God.[2]

I appreciate the concern of these writers to avoid a theological pluralism that views every spiritual path as valid and a theological fuzziness that treats doctrine as of minor importance.

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[1] Andy Bannister, *Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?* (London: Inter-Varsity, 2021).

[2] See for example, Al Mohler, "Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?" *Decision*, 1 February 2016. Online: https://billygraham.org/decision-magazine/december-2013/do-christians-and-muslims-worship-the-same-god/# (accessed 30 March 2021); John Piper, "Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same Deity?" Online: https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/do-christians-and-muslims-worship-the-same-deity (accessed 30 March 2021).

See also the contributions of Gerald R. McDermott and Jerry L. Walls in *Do Christians, Muslims, and Jews Worship the Same God? Four Views* (ed. Ronnie P. Campbell and Christopher Gnanakan; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2019), chapters 3, 4.

For various forms of the alternative view, see Francis J. Beckwith's and Joseph L. Cumming's contribution in chapters 2 and 5 of the same volume; Ida Glaser and Hannah Kay, *Thinking Biblically about Islam: Genesis, Transfiguration, Transformation* (Carlisle: Langham, 2016), Kindle location 5063; Vinoth Ramachandra, "Pocket-Sized Gods." Online: https://vinothramachandra.wordpress.com/2015/12/30/pocket-sized-gods/ (accessed 30 March 2021); Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1995), 228-230.

A variety of views on the question can be found in the *Occasional Bulletin of the Evangelical Missiological Society* Special Edition 2016. Online: https://www.emsweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/OB_Fall_2016.pdf (accessed 30 March 2021).

I also appreciate that these writers and speakers desire above all to defend and proclaim the utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. I share this concern and desire. However, I believe that the assertion that Muslims and Christians worship different gods is deeply problematic both theologically and practically.

Before I delve into my reasons, I want to provide some caveats:

- I do not believe that anyone can be saved through Islam, or indeed any other religious system (including Christianity). People can only be saved through Jesus Christ. My heart's desire and prayer for Muslims is that they come to faith in Jesus Christ and experience salvation through him.
- I do not believe that Muslim and Christian views of God are more or less the same, or that the differences are minor and unimportant. There are some very significant differences. Theology, including theology proper, is of the utmost importance. This also applies to differences among Christians in their understanding of God.
- Within Christianity and Islam there are diverse views on the nature of God, so my main focus will be on what may be termed the theological mainstreams of both faiths, recognising the problems of defining and delimiting these mainstreams.
- I use "worship" in the sense of a human activity that is directed towards God. Not all worship is acceptable to God, as Isaiah 29:13 indicates:

  The Lord says:
  "These people come near to me with their mouth
  and honour me with their lips,
  but their hearts are far from me.
  Their worship of me
  is based on merely human rules they have been taught."[3]

Indeed, as the Lord Jesus said, the only way to the Father is through him (John 14:6).

II. *Analogies*

Andy Bannister writes,

> *Do Muslims and Christians also agree on the nature and character of that god? In short, do they worship the same god, or is Allah (the name the Qur'an uses for god) very different from Yahweh (the name by which the god of the Bible identifies himself)?*[4]

Bannister goes on to use the analogy of two people talking about their friend Ahmad. They each describe Ahmad in mutually incompatible terms (tall/very short, etc.) until they come to the realisation that they are talking about two entirely different individuals who happen to share the same name.[5] Nowhere in his book, does Bannister consider an alternative analogy;

[3] Bible quotations are from the New International Version 2011, unless otherwise indicated.
[4] Bannister, *Same God?* 66.
[5] Ibid., 73.

that these two persons' different and incompatible descriptions of Ahmad are due to at least one of them having an incomplete and defective recollection of the same individual.

Here is my attempt at an alternative analogy. I have never met Albert Einstein - he died before I was born. I am also not a physicist, so my understanding of Einstein's theory of relativity is sketchy. Compared to a close friend and colleague of Einstein who, let's say, had an excellent understanding of his work, my knowledge of the man and his work is extremely limited. I know a little about him but never knew him. However, if his friend and I refer to Albert Einstein, it is the same Albert Einstein we refer to, even though our knowledge of him varies widely.

Suppose I extend the metaphor. Suppose I have some wrong information about Einstein, some details of his personal life and some mistaken beliefs about his work as a physicist. Yet when I refer to Albert Einstein, it would still be the famous physicist I am speaking of.

Someone can believe in and worship the one true God, the only God, but to do so with inadequate knowledge and some mistaken ideas, and without personal knowledge of God – they may know something about God, but they don't know him.

III. *Denial of the Deity of Christ and the Trinity*

Many objections to the view that Muslims and Christians worship the same God are argued on the basis that Muslims deny the doctrines of the trinity and the deity of Christ.

1. Old Testament Believers

These objections sometimes fail to recognise adequately the progressive and cumulative nature of Biblical revelation. Old Testament saints did not have a clear understanding of some of the beliefs which were much later formulated as trinitarian doctrine, because these beliefs hadn't been revealed at that stage of redemptive history. For Jesus' disciples, understanding of Jesus' deity did not happen on the day they met him. The identity of Jesus seems to have been something they wrestled with – "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him" (Mark 4:41). It is probably only after the resurrection that they come to worship Jesus as God.[6]

2. Post-Pentecost Jews Who Rejected Jesus

It could be argued that these Old Testament believers would not have rejected the doctrine of the trinity had it been presented to them, and indeed, the disciples do come to acknowledge Jesus' deity and worship him. But this cannot be said of those Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah, both during his public ministry, but especially after his resurrection and ascension and Pentecost. These were Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah, let alone as divine. And if they rejected that Jesus is divine, it follows that they would also have rejected the doctrine of the trinity.

[6] See, for example, John 20:28.

Yet in all the interactions we find with these Jews in the Gospels on the lips of Jesus, or in Acts and the Epistles in the speeches and writings of the apostles, there is never any hint of, "you Jews are worshipping the wrong god, we're telling you about the right God."

On the contrary, Paul writes, "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Romans 10:1-2).

The God the Israelites are zealous for is clearly the same God that Paul worships. Their problem is that their knowledge of God is defective – "their zeal is not based on knowledge."

The clearest example of this is Paul's own experience as recorded in his letters and in Acts. When Saul of Tarsus set out from Jerusalem to Damascus, he hated Jesus of Nazareth. He utterly rejected the idea that Jesus was Israel's Messiah, let alone that he was in any sense divine. Any early expression or formulation of what we now call the trinity, he would have rejected outright as being blasphemous nonsense. If you argue that as a Jew who believed the Old Testament, he might have had some sense of plurality within the One God,[7] he would have utterly rejected that Jesus had anything to do with that plurality, so he cannot be regarded as some kind of proto-trinitarian.[8]

As we know, by the time Saul had arrived in Damascus and regained his sight through the ministry of Ananias, everything had changed. And yet we find no hint in his writings or anywhere else in the New Testament that Saul worshipped one god when he left Jerusalem and then worshipped a totally different god (the true God) by the time he was healed by Ananias in Damascus.

On the contrary, when Paul addresses a crowd of hostile Jews in Jerusalem, he says, "I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today" (Acts 22:3). The implication is that it is the one true God that they and Paul were zealous for. The whole tenor of this speech in which Paul is defending himself against the accusations of the Jews is to emphasise that Paul is a devout Jew who serves the God of Israel. There is not the slightest hint that Paul and his fellow followers of Jesus are on the one hand and those Jews who were hostile to Jesus on the other, worshipping different gods.

If Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah and as divine, and thus by extension would have rejected the trinity, can be said to worship the same God as Paul and the other early Christians, Muslim denial of the trinity and the deity of Christ cannot be used as a basis for denying that Muslims and Christians seek to worship the same God.

Of many Muslims also, it could be said, "that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

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[7] See, for example, Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), chapters 1-2. Boyarin, an orthodox Jewish scholar, argues that ideas of plurality within the one God and incarnation were reasonably widespread in Second Temple Judaism.

[8] Gerald R. McDermott builds on the work of scholars like Boyarin to argue that Jews and Christians worship the same God, but that Muslims do not. However, McDermott does not deal with the fundamental problem that any sort of proto-trinitarian belief that rejects outright that Jesus of Nazareth shares the identity of the one God is definitely not Biblical trinitarian belief; "Only Jesus's identity separates Jews and Christians" – but if Jesus is in fact God incarnate, the second person of the trinity, that "only" is enormous! Gerald R. McDermott, "Jews and Christians Worship the Same God: Shared Revelation View," in *Same God?* 97.

IV. *Other Objections*

Some may object that Islam is much further removed from Christianity than Judaism because Islam does not recognise the Old Testament.[9] We will attempt to answer this, but first two comments:

First, this objection cannot be based on Muslim denials of the deity of Christ or the trinity because Jews such as Saul of Tarsus, before his experience on the Damascus Road, would have denied these doctrines. So, the basis of this argument has to be on grounds other than Muslim denial of the trinity and the deity of Christ.

Second, do Muslims actually reject the Old Testament?

The relationship of Islam to the Old Testament and indeed the New Testament is somewhat ambiguous. True, most Muslims never read the Bible and are pretty ignorant of its contents, and most are told that the Scriptures of Jews and Christians are to some degree corrupted.

Andy Bannister speaks exclusively in terms of the Qur'an displacing the Bible.[10] That has been the majority opinion among scholars throughout most of Islamic history, but it is arguably not the view of the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an speaks of the Torah, Psalms and Gospel[11] which the Jews and Christians possessed at the time of Muhammad as being revelation, light and guidance from Allah.[12] When Muslims take this Qur'anic testimony seriously and read the Bible, accepting it as from God (as some indeed have done), the effects can be revolutionary, not least for their understanding of God.

But let's for a moment grant the validity of the objection that Islam is much further removed from Christianity than Judaism, because Islam does not have the Old Testament revelation about God. In general, this approach tends to emphasise the differences between Islamic and Christian theology and minimise any similarities.

One example of this approach is Andy Bannister's book, in which he says, "There are five key characteristics of Yahweh, the God of the Bible, that are central to his identity throughout the Old and New Testaments…"[13]

These five characteristics of the God of the Bible are, that he is relational, can be known, is holy, is love and that he has suffered. Bannister maintains that the Qur'an teaches none of

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[9] It should also be remembered that Judaism in New Testament times was far from monolithic, and included the Sadducees, who accepted only the Pentateuch as fully authoritative and denied the doctrine of the resurrection. See N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), chapter 7.

[10] Bannister, *Same God?* passim.

[11] Or 'Taurat', 'Zabur' and 'Injil'. The *Injil* is used of the book Christians possessed in the seventh century, so appears to refer to the entire New Testament.

[12] See for example, Qur'an 3:3, 84; 4:47, 136; 5:46-48; 6:97, 154. Some recent Muslim scholars are taking this Qur'anic testimony seriously; see, for example, Abdullah Saeed (Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne) "How Muslims View the Scriptures of the People of the Book: Towards a Reassessment?" in *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Dialogue, and Transformation* (ed. L. Anceschi, J. Camilleri, R. Palapathwala, A. Wicking; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), chapter 10, Kindle edition.

[13] Bannister, *Same God?* 100.

these things and therefore the God that it speaks of is a completely different being from the God of the Bible.[14]

In response, first, it is highly debatable that these are *the* five key characteristics of God in the Bible. They are all certainly hugely important, but what about God's eternity, his almighty power, his wisdom, his mercy, or his justice? All these attributes are surely vital to the Biblical portrayal of God – and they would be affirmed by most Muslims, even if they might understand some of these attributes somewhat differently. Indeed, some of them are actually understood differently within Christianity, as we will see.

Second, the distinctions between Muslim and Christian views of God are not quite as watertight as Andy Bannister makes out. I know Muslims who would speak of having a relationship with Allah or at least desiring that. Muslims speak to Allah in prayer. Mona Siddiqui writes, "there is no suggestion in the Qur'an that God wishes to reveal of himself *just yet*."[15] That is quite different from saying that God *cannot* be known.

The highly popular *Study Quran* in its commentary on 18:31 says, "In Sufi interpretations, the various luxuries of the Garden as described in the Quran are understood to be symbols of the spiritual joys of witnessing God in all His Majesty and Beauty and of the intimacy, love, and union with God that the righteous will experience there."[16]

This suggests that in these particular Muslim interpretations, God is relational. The same volume, commenting on 10:100, says, "As the early Sufi figure Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859 or 248/861) is reported to have said, 'I came to know my Lord through my Lord. Had it not been for my Lord, I would not have known my Lord' (al-Risālat al-qushayriyya [Damascus, 2000], 475)".[17] This clearly reflects the belief among some Muslims at least, that God is knowable.

I asked a friend who is a Muslim cleric and who has studied for over a decade in Qom, the centre for Shia training in Iran, if it is possible to know God. He responded that it is possible to know God's attributes but not his essence. While I personally don't find this satisfactory, it is very close to the view of Basil the Great and much Eastern Christian theology.[18]

In short, Bannister's comparison of Muslim and Christian views does not do justice to the range of theological positions within either community.

Third, while the Qur'an never says, "God is love", it does speak of God loving certain people and it also speaks of God as merciful. True, mercy is not the same as love, but there is a significant overlap. Neither is God's love always seen as conditional in Islam. The *Study Quran*, commenting on 5:54, says, "the verse suggests, conversely, that God's love of people precedes their love for Him. Because the verse seems to indicate that God's love for a person must precede that person's love for God."[19]

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[14] Ibid., chapter 4.

[15] Mona Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims and Jesus* (New Haven: Yale, 2013), 12. (Italics mine.)

[16] Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), Kindle Edition, 741.

[17] Nasr et al., *Study Quran*, 563.

[18] Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2004), 152-153.

[19] Nasr et al., *Study Quran,* 306.

God's love has not always been given prominence in Christian theology. Donald Macleod points out that, "The [Westminster] Shorter Catechism does not mention love in its list of divine attributes (Answer 4) and there is no chapter on it in either Charnock or Bavinck. All of these are content to subsume the divine love under the divine goodness."[20]

Presumably, neither the Catechism nor Charnock nor Bavinck would list love as being one of *the* five key characteristics of the God of the Bible.

Fourth, Bannister asserts that a crucial difference between the Bible and the Qur'an in their portrayal of God is that in the latter, God does not suffer. This is interesting because a large section of the Christian Church has traditionally maintained the impassibility of God – that God cannot and does not suffer.[21] Do those Christians who believe in the impassibility of God believe in a different God from those Christians who believe that God is capable of suffering? It is, after all, a significant difference in how we view God.

There is a danger of minimising the differences between mainstream Christian and Muslim conceptions of God. There are major differences of huge significance. There is, however, an opposite danger of minimising areas of common belief and overlap between the two conceptions of God and driving an absolute wedge between differences that may be matters of relative divergence or varying emphases.[22] In both Christian and Muslim understanding, God is one, eternal, self-existent and underived, creator,[23] ruler, just, forgiving, all-knowing, merciful, who judges justly and who raises the dead.[24] Of course, the exact way in which these things are true of God and the degree to which they are emphasised varies between the two faiths, as indeed they do within those faith traditions, but these beliefs ought not to be discounted, and indeed, they can be built upon, adapted and developed as we try to communicate the Biblical vision of God to Muslims.

V. *Non-Jews and Non-Christians in the New Testament*

The New Testament provides us with some examples of dialogue with people who are neither Jewish nor Christian - with people who are further removed from biblical revelation. These examples shed light on this issue.

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[20] Donald Macleod, *Behold Your God* (rev. and exp. ed.; Tain: Christian Focus, 1995), 230-231.

[21] See, for example, the view of Kevin DeYoung, "Tis Mystery All, the Immortal Dies: Why the Gospel of Christ's Suffering is More Glorious Because God Does Not Suffer." Online: https://media.thegospelcoalition.org/static-blogs/kevin-deyoung/files/2010/04/T4G-2010-KDY-v_2.pdf (accessed 30 March 2021). For a different view, see Macleod, *Behold Your God*, 232-238.

[22] Bannister does this with the holiness of God, lamenting that the Qur'an describes God as holy only three times. Bannister, *Same God?* 155. The glass really is half empty!

[23] I find it fascinating that when Bannister briefly speaks of God as Creator, he slips into speaking as if it is the same God that Muslims and Christians worship: "That God is the source of all that is, the ultimate 'it' behind all reality, the one who called into existence every particle and who wrote every law of physics – that God is the sole creator is something on which Muslims and Christians can wholeheartedly agree, a not unimportant point of contact between these two faith traditions." Bannister, *Same God?* 105.

[24] See Chawkat Moucarry, *Faith to Faith: Christianity and Islam in Dialogue* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2001), 83-94.

1. Samaritans

Muslims have sometimes been compared with Samaritans.[25] The Samaritans, by the first Century, were monotheistic. They had their own version of the Pentateuch but rejected the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. There had been a long history of hostility between Jews and Samaritans which surfaces in the Gospels. Here is part of the conversation between the Lord Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well:

> *"Sir"' the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*
>
> *"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews."* (John 4:19-22)

This woman seems to assume that Jews and Samaritans worship the same God, but that the geographical centre of worship is different. If they worshipped two utterly distinct deities, the locale would not be an issue.

Jesus makes it clear that he too regards Jews and Samaritans as worshipping the same God. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." (John 4:22) They worship the same God, but the Samaritans do not know him, whereas the Jews do, "because salvation is from the Jews." By this, Jesus probably means the whole narrative of Jewish and Israelite history found in the Old Testament through which God was revealing his salvation and which is fulfilled ultimately in the Messiah Jesus.

If the Samaritans worshipped a different god, who from the Biblical point of view would therefore be an idol, why make the point that the Samaritans did not know him? If it were a different god, Jesus would have said something like, "You Samaritans worship an idol/a false god."

Jesus' description of the Samaritans, "You worship what you do not know" fits the situation of many Muslims. They seek to worship God, the only God there is, but don't know him – that is until they come to know him through the Messiah Jesus.

2. Athenians

The Athenians whom Paul encountered in Acts 17 had a view of God much further removed from the Biblical revelation than the mainstream Islamic view is, yet Paul still sees a common object of worship. "For as I was walking around and looking carefully at your objects of worship, I found an altar with the inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What you worship as something unknown – this is the one I am proclaiming to you" (Acts 17:23, my translation).

Paul proclaims to the Athenians the God whom they know of, but whom by their own admission, they do not know.

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[25] Glaser and Kay, *Thinking Biblically,* Kindle location 5608.

Their admission of ignorance about God allows Paul to reveal or proclaim what this God is like. It's as if they have presented Paul with a blank page to fill with Biblical content about God.

Tim Dieppe seeks to argue against the idea that Paul was equating the Unknown God with Yahweh. Space does not permit a detailed refutation of Dieppe's arguments, but he does seem to contradict his main thesis by conceding that,

> *In his speech, Paul attributes this quote to "some of your own poets". In this way he is again arguing against the charge of introducing a foreign god. He claims that some of their conceptions of God are correct: It is true that we are God's offspring…*
>
> *Paul builds on [the presence of the altar and the story regarding Epimenides behind it] by quoting from [Epimenides] in his speech. Paul may be hinting that the god who answered the prayers of Epimenides, whom they do not know and are not worshipping properly, is actually the God he is proclaiming…*
>
> *What Paul did do is agree with an admission of ignorance about the nature of God in Athenian culture and proclaim that he is there to explain what this God, whom they are ignorantly attempting to worship, is really like.*[26]

What is interesting is that Paul does not introduce some entirely new God. He takes the truth they know, however limited it may be, and uses it to build a bridge to communicate the gospel.

John Stott comments, "converts who turn to Christ from a non-Christian religious system, usually think of themselves not as having transferred their worship from one God to Another, but as having begun now to worship in truth the God they were previously trying to worship in ignorance, error or distortion."[27]

Joseph Cumming makes an observation about his friends who are Muslim background believers in Christ (MBBs):

> *Nearly all my MBB friends agree that they did not truly know God before meeting Christ. Some say their worship of God was empty before they knew Christ, while others say it was meaningful but incomplete. But almost none say that in their Islamic piety they worshipped some false deity or idol.*[28]

Bible translators almost always use an existing word for God in the receptor language – usually the name or word for a high god. There is thus some continuity with the pre-Christian/pre-Bible translation view of God, although, of course, the task of translating and teaching the Bible will radically challenge previously held views about God. Professor Andrew Walls (speaking about the use of *kurios* in the New Testament) has said, "None of us can take

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[26] Tim Dieppe, "The Same God: Did Paul Claim the Athenians Worshipped Yahweh?" *Foundations* 77 (Autumn 2019), 51-52.

[27] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 285.

[28] Joseph L. Cumming, "Focus on Common Ground in Christian-Muslim Relationships: A Ministry Reflection" In *Same God?* (ed. Ronnie P. Campbell and Christopher Gnanakan; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2019), 217-218.

in a new idea except in terms of the ideas we already have. Once implanted, however, this understanding of the word received a set of controls from its new biblical frame of reference. In time, much of the original [Greek pagan] loading of the word disappeared altogether."[29]

Many Muslims seek to worship God, the only God there is, but a God whom they do not know. Our task, like Paul's, is to proclaim this God to them – to fill whatever concept people have of God with Biblical content and truth.

VI. *Practicalities in Communicating the Gospel*

The Qur'an and most Muslims assume that Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God, although the former two groups are in error about him.[30] The Qur'an says, "And say, 'We believe in that which was sent down unto us and was sent down unto you; our God and your God are one, and unto Him are we submitters'" (Al-'Ankabut 29:46)[31]; "God is our Lord and your Lord. Unto us our deeds, and unto you your deeds; there is no argument between us and you. God will gather us together and unto Him is the journey's end" (Al-Shura 42:15).

For most Christians, the Qur'an's view will not be conclusive, but it is significant as we seek to communicate Biblical truth with Muslims.

We create an enormous barrier to communication if our starting point is, "You Muslims are worshipping a different god from the God we worship. We worship the true God; you are therefore worshipping an idol, or something that doesn't exist." Even if we don't state it quite as bluntly as this, if we assume it and communicate it, there is a huge barrier to overcome.[32]

How much better to start with the truth Muslims already have about God and use this to build a bridge for communicating biblical teaching about God, correcting wrong ideas, and developing and bringing to focus indistinct ideas. It is, as we have seen, the way Jesus and Paul communicated.

About the Author

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[29] Andrew Walls, "The Translation Principle in Christian History," in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996). (Parentheses mine).

[30] There is debate as to the identity and theology of the Christians or *Nasara* mentioned in the Qur'an. See Tom Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword: The Battle for Global Empire and the End of the Ancient World* (London: Little, Brown, Kindle edition, 2012), 316-317.

[31] Quotations from the Qur'an are taken from Nasr et al., eds., *Study Quran.*

[32] A related but separate issue is that of language. These two issues are often confused, with questions being posed such as, "Is Allah the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ?" All Arabic-speaking Christians and Arabic Bible translations use 'Allah' for God. So the answer to that question depends on your view of Allah. If you begin a conversation about God in Arabic with a Muslim, you will use 'Allah' - it is the only word in the language. He will assume you are talking about the same Being that he believes in and prays to. If that is not the case, it is incumbent on you to make that immediately clear. However, that will prove difficult; what word will you use instead? Throughout the history of Islam, Arab Christians have stuck with 'Allah'.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON CARL TRUEMAN LECTURE: "THE OTHER GENEVAN: ROUSSEAU AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN MIND"

Stephen Clark

Abstract

This article examines the position of Carl Trueman on the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in shaping the modern mind. It argues, that while Trueman provides many helpful insights, the overall historiography presented is not compelling. Other figures, and other influences, have played significant roles in shaping the modern world. However, though God works in and through history, the ultimate explanation for the modern mind is found in Romans 1, and God removing his restraint of society.

I. *Introduction*

This lecture was given live online on Thursday 4 March 2021 as the Annual Lecture in Church History and Theology of Edinburgh Theological Seminary. It was followed by questions which could be sent in and to which Professor Trueman responded. The lecture is available to watch on YouTube.[1]

II. *Main Thesis of Lecture*

Noting that Rousseau wrote, amongst other things, *Confessions*,[2] Professor Trueman compared and contrasted these with Augustine's *Confessions*.[3] Although, Professor Trueman claimed, Rousseau was familiar with this work of Augustine and used a not dissimilar example to Augustine's famous reference to his childhood stealing from a pear tree, Professor Trueman argued that there were numerous fundamental differences between the two works: both deal with the interior life, with *psychology*, but Augustine, as with the psalms, looks out of himself to God and speaks with God; Rousseau, by contrast, turns in on himself and finds true authenticity within the inner life of the psyche. What goes on inside is the *real* person.

Professor Trueman contrasted this emphasis upon the real person, the soul, with the emphases of two very different figures: Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Jefferson. The former stressed that at death it is not the person who might enter heaven but the soul of that person. One must await the resurrection of the body before the human being is truly in the eternal

[1] https://ets.ac.uk/dr-carl-trueman-the-other-genevan-rousseau-and-the-rise-of-the-modern-mind/

[2] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Trans. J.M. Cohen; London: Penguin, 1953).

[3] Augustine, *Confessions* (Trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin; London: Penguin, 1961).

state because humans are embodied souls, where both are important. In other words, important as is the soul, it is not the whole story. Thomas Jefferson defended liberty and plurality of religious belief on the ground that if someone believed differently from him, it would not break his leg or hurt his pocket. (The rise of Islamic terrorism rather knocks that idea out of the ground today: such a difference in religious *belief* can lead to a difference in *behaviour* and the difference may be extreme. It led to mass murder at the Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena some years back, and the slaughter at the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre on 9/11 confirmed rather frighteningly the teaching of Jesus that from within, out of the heart, proceed all manner of evils. But I shall not pursue this point now.) In other words, Jefferson was considering harm which could be measured objectively in terms of financial loss or physical damage. By contrast, Professor Trueman argued, Rousseau's approach fastens attention upon how our inner feelings are affected.

This emphasis upon the psyche is seen in its full expression in characters like Caitlyn Jenner, who on "coming out" as transgender, said, in effect, that they felt that they had been living a lie: although having male chromosomes, male anatomy and male physiology, what mattered was how they felt about themselves. The inner psyche trumps the outward body.

This emphasis, Professor Trueman maintained, also has massive implications for morality. Morality has now moved to emotions and how one feels. Even more, it is to do with taste. Someone may be bald but to tell them that they are bald is in bad taste, *even though it is true.* This point may be granted, Professor Trueman acknowledged. The difficulty arises, however, he said, when someone may feel offended and "hurt" by another's observation that their behaviour is wrong: what matters is *not* the idea of an objective standard but, rather, the effect upon one's feelings of such an assertion. Thus, a kind of "victim mentality" is spawned.

Professor Trueman alluded to other aspects of Rousseau's thinking: the ideal state of nature; the fact that evil does not arise from within but is the result of certain forces upon one; etc. The main feature which I wish to consider, however, is that which is encapsulated in the lecture's title: Rousseau and the rise of the modern mind.

III. *Critical Analysis*

As would be expected from as erudite a historian as Professor Trueman, there was so much in this lecture which was informative, stimulating, thought provoking and, quite simply, excellent. Moreover, the Q&A session was most profitable. I wish, however, to question certain elements of the lecture, including its main thesis.

1. On the genealogy of ideas: correlation is not causation

This fairly fundamental idea from the realm of the natural sciences is expressed in the realm of logic as the fallacy *post hoc ergo propter hoc* ("after this, therefore because of this"). The fact that event B follows event A does not necessarily mean that A has *caused* B: one must establish a *causal link*. Similarly, the fact that a figure in history held certain views and expressed certain ideas does not necessarily mean that that figure has contributed to an outlook which is

generally adopted in a society or culture many years later. One needs to demonstrate not only the similarity in the ideas but the *causal* or *contributory* link. And even eminent scholars may fall into the fallacious way of thinking that correlation equals causation. I shall illustrate the point I am making from the realm of biblical studies before applying this observation to aspects of Professor Trueman's thesis.

Samuel Sandmel's celebrated 1961 presidential address to the Society for Biblical Literature was entitled "Parallelomania". He questioned the value of collecting "parallels" from a variety of sources to New Testament passages and ideas. As Dick France commented: "The tendency is to look for 'parallels' to titles like 'Son of God' or to concepts of incarnation or pre-existence, or the attribution of honours to a man, and to regard these parallels as *explanations* of the New Testament data, as showing the sources from which these ideas crept into Christian language…"[4] In other words, scholars had been confusing parallels in certain titles or concepts found outside the New Testament as then being the source of those titles or concepts within the New Testament. But the thrust of Sandmel's criticism was that to show a parallel did not necessarily establish dependence. In the same way, parallels between things which Rousseau said and ideas and modes of thinking today do not establish that it was Rousseau's work which either caused this way of thinking or contributed to it. Let me develop this point.

One of the things which characterises much modern western thinking is the idea of "gender fluidity", an idea to which Professor Trueman referred: gender is not something which is fixed. It would not be too difficult for me to argue that this way of thinking comes from the work of Sartre. Central to his existential philosophy was the notion that existence precedes essence. In this sense, we do not have a nature or essence which determines who we are. Professor Roger Scruton neatly summarises Sartre's approach: "What I am is for me to *decide* . . . My freedom is my essence."[5] This kind of approach surely chimes in very neatly and nicely with transgender ideas. But it is one thing to assert this; it would be a very different matter to establish and demonstrate that Sartre's philosophy has *contributed* to or *caused* the current emphasis on gender fluidity in the West.[6] But my point is this: if one were to establish this link, it would call into question Rousseau's role in all this because the formative philosophical influences upon Sartre were Heidegger and Husserl. Indeed, Sartre's view that human beings determine their essence meshes with gender fluidity far more than does Rousseau's philosophy, which, as I shall demonstrate a little later, clearly maintained that there was a feminine nature to women which should not be changed.

Of course, there can be real value in demonstrating *parallels* in ideas because this can have great explanatory power: thus, the emphasis upon the inner self; the idea that authenticity is tied to how we feel about ourselves; that feeling matters more than thinking: none can deny

[4] R.T. France, "The Worship Of Jesus: A Neglected Factor In Christological Debate" in H.H. Rowdon (Ed.), *Christ The Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Leicester: inter-Varity Press, 1982), 19.

[5] Roger Scruton, "Continental Philosophy from Fichte to Sartre" in Anthony Kenny (Ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History Of Western Philosophy* (London: QPD, 1994), 235. Scruton's italics.

[6] I stress 'the West' because, of course, gender fluidity of a male to female kind is fairly prominent in parts of the East. The phenomenon of 'lady boys' in Thailand does not really come from western philosophical ideas but is the result of various factors. The widespread toleration of this phenomenon is linked to certain Buddhist ideas.

that these emphases characterise much of life in the West today, just as they were ideas fairly central to Rousseau. Demonstrating that such an approach *can* lead, for example, to current ideas about transgender may be very helpful. What I am questioning, however, is the notion that the rise of this kind of thinking can be traced back to Rousseau, that Rousseau's ideas *have* led or contributed to the present state of the Western mind.

2. Rousseau and fixed ideas of gender

Professor Trueman quoted from numerous works by Rousseau but one which he did not cite was the *Lettre à d'Alembert*. In the course of this work, Rousseau compared the theatre to a large city like Paris, with its reversal of natural values. He was particularly critical of the effect which the theatre had upon women: he believed that whereas "woman was naturally modest and self-effacing, the theatre makes her a shameless figure who transforms love into a public spectacle; the very existence of actresses also sets the example of a completely unfeminine way of life that is characteristic of a society in which women set the tone and rule the *salons*, reducing men to a condition of abject and effeminate dependence".[7] A moment's reflection should soon demonstrate that this is very far removed indeed from the current way of assuming that we are what we feel. I shall elaborate.

In the first place, Rousseau had a view of womanhood and manhood: he disliked the effect of the theatre upon a woman because it changed what she naturally was. One of Rousseau's big concerns, of course, was with the way that humanity had been changed from its "state of nature". But in dealing with the theatre, he was comparing women as they were as he perceived them to be at that time – that is, *not* in a state of nature - with what they became as a result of the effect of the theatre. Moreover, he was troubled by the knock-on effect that this had upon men. But if I am who I feel myself to be; if to be truly authentic is to be like Caitlyn Jenner – I feel like a woman and so to be authentic I must change my body to be like that of a woman – then this surely is the very antithesis of someone like Rousseau telling me what I am *really* as a man or what a woman *really* is. In other words, although Rousseau emphasised the inner life, he did *not* do so to such an extent as to deny what he believed to be certain objective realities. But this, of course, is precisely the issue with transgender.

One may defend Professor Trueman's thesis by saying that this is simply an illustration of the fact that Rousseau, like all people, was at points inconsistent or that he was simply, to a certain extent, a child of his time. Indeed, gender re-assignment by surgery and hormone treatment was hardly available in his day! But this will not really do and that is for several reasons.

First, to wish to try to trace ideas on transgender back to Rousseau when he had clearly fixed ideas about male and female and then say he was inconsistent on this seems, to say the least, a little odd: it is as if one were saying, "Rousseau's thinking has led to transgenderism. Oh, but by the way, he believed in fixed ideas of male and female." Again, it would be rather as

[7] Ronald Grimsley, "Rousseau, Jean-Jacques" in Paul Edwards (Editor in Chief), *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* Vol. 7 (New York: MacMillan & The Free Press / London: Collier-MacMillan, 1967), 220.

if one said that the thinking of someone who believes in the fixity of species derives from Darwin's idea of modification by descent!

Of course, it may be pointed out that Professor Trueman was not claiming that Rousseau's ideas have led *directly* to transgender but, rather, that he was simply pointing out that Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of the *psyche*, the inner life, is an idea which, in time, can lead others to say that how one feels about oneself is what determines one's gender. Indeed. But this in no way answers my point, which is this: Rousseau was critical of the theatre because it led to women viewing themselves in a certain way and Rousseau regarded this way of viewing themselves as *wrong.* In other words, he was critical of their view of themselves because it did not correspond with what Rousseau regarded as a certain objective reality. So, at points, Rousseau's view of objective reality trumped someone else's inner psyche.

A second problem with Professor Trueman's thesis is that the one thing that many transgender people do *not* do is to say that *all* that matters is how they feel. The whole point of undergoing hormone treatment and gender reassignment surgery is to *bring their body into line with how they feel*. It is not a case of a man saying, 'I feel like a woman and that is all that matters. I want everyone to call me Jane.' No: they wish to *look* like a woman *physically*. They feel that they are in the wrong body. The body *matters* to them; in fact, it matters to such an extent that in some parts of the world they have parted with significant amounts of cash and undergone intrusive surgery to change their genitalia as well as undergone hormone treatment to change their entire appearance. So, the issue is not simply that all that matters is the inner life and that the outer life is of no consequence. Quite the contrary! To say, "I am trapped in the wrong body," is to say that the outer life matters.

In fact, the third observation at this point is that transgender people not only wish their bodies to correspond with how they feel but they want their bodies to be perceived by others to be in line with how they feel. A sixteen stone muscular red neck with a very strong beard may feel like a woman and believe themself to be a woman and thus not be bothered with changing their physical appearance but it is hardly likely that this will cut the mustard with work colleagues and social acquaintances when they introduce themselves as Mary.

3. Morality: objectivity and emotion

Simply to contrast how we used to think of morality (who is the "we"?) with the emphasis today on feelings-based morality and on the need to be "authentic" by being true to oneself is, I suggest, a huge oversimplification, especially when this is traced back to Rousseau. A brief analysis should demonstrate the inadequacy of this approach.

To begin with, if I were mischievous, I might say that the present approach can be traced back to Shakespeare's Polonius. In his rather pompous and heavily paternalistic speech to his son Laertes before the latter leaves home, he tells him, "This above all – to thine own self be true." For Laertes, this is the supreme thing about good living. But I shall not be mischievous!

More seriously the oversimplification of Professor Trueman's thesis concerning ideas about morality can be seen at several levels. In his wonderfully entertaining book, *Descartes' Baby* Professor Paul Bloom of Yale University demonstrates how the way we make moral

choices cannot simply be put into either/or categories of rationality or emotion. He cites numerous examples where people from different cultures unthinkingly and on the basis of "disgust" gave emotionally or intuitively based reactions to certain scenarios which raised questions of a moral nature. When asked to give a reasoned justification for their responses, most were unable to do so but still held to their moral conviction. Their reactions were gut reactions: they just "felt" something was wrong or right even if they could not rationalise it. Interestingly, the only subjects in this experiment who *were* able to give reasons were those who would be most attuned to "the modern mind" the rise of which Professor Trueman was exploring in his lecture: students at American elite universities. On the other hand, Professor Bloom refers to an experiment by psychologist Philip Tetlock and his colleagues in which students not only morally disapproved of a hospital administrator who, they thought, made a wrong decision in not agreeing to pay for a life-saving operation for a dying child but also disapproved of that administrator agreeing to fund the operation after he had time to mull the matter over before reaching such a decision. So here were students acting on their gut feeling. Professor Bloom goes on, however, to give examples where clear thought goes into forming a moral judgement on an issue.[8] In other words, it is not a simple either/or, and to suggest that people used to make moral decisions based on principles is to skew the evidence, just as it is misleading to say that today people are simply governed by how they feel.

Further justification for what I wrote in the previous sentence comes from a great work on conscience by the late Kenneth Kirk, a professor of moral and pastoral theology. In this book, he explored the question of whether conscience is informed by emotion or by reason, and traced the various views on this held by different philosophers: over the years some regarded emotion as the determining element in conscience, whereas others thought that reason was the controlling factor.[9] In *Some Principles of Moral Theology And Their Application* he pointed out that *both* are involved in the way in which conscience assesses our moral choices.[10] The early twentieth-century Oxford professor of moral theology had certain things in common with the twenty-first century secular Professor of Psychology at Yale!

Moral relativism is one of the corollaries of maintaining that moral choices are purely a matter of emotion. This follows from the fact that my gut feelings may very well differ from yours. But one of the things which surely characterises the modern mind is a belief in moral absolutes, albeit that they may well be very different absolutes from those which Christians have. Thus to suggest that it is morally right to hold that homosexual acts are morally wrong and that it is morally wrong to seek to transition from one's genetic gender to another will lead to a howl of protest from many in the LGBTQ+ community.[11] If one responds to someone

[8] Paul Bloom, *Descartes' Baby: How The Science of Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human* (London: Heinemann, 2004), 127-129, 132-133.

[9] Kenneth E. Kirk, *Conscience And Its Problems* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

[10] '. . .to regard conscience purely as a function of the intellect is to ignore the all-important fact that it contains an *emotional* element of attraction to what is good and repulsion from what is evil': Kenneth E. Kirk, *Some Principles of Moral Theology And Their Application* (London: Longmans, 1926), 47, n. 1.

[11] I am aware that Douglas Murray, in *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), questions the meaningfulness of speaking of an LGBTQ+ community, especially given the fact that many lesbians maintain that a genetic male who has transitioned to female is not truly a woman and that some gay people

from that community by saying, "Yes but this is how I feel and I am being authentic by telling you what I really feel," you will be told in no uncertain terms that your feelings are wrong. I may say, "This is who I am *and* this determines how I feel about people who are different from me," but I will be told that I am nothing other than a bigot.

Various "conservative" bloggers and commentators have said that the Black Lives Matter movement is tightly tied to the LGBTQ+ community. It is not my purpose here to assess whether this claim is well-founded or not, nor am I concerned in this article to comment on whether that is of any relevance to the legitimacy of the aims of the Black Lives Matter movement. What I do wish to emphasise is the fact that there are certainly those who support that movement who are passionately committed to the protection of the rights of black people. This is, for them, a moral absolute. If they encounter a member of the Ku Klux Klan or a white supremacist, they will be singularly unimpressed to be told, "you feel it's right to support the rights of black people but I feel differently." Why? Because they believe that there are certain moral absolutes, even though they may well lack an adequate intellectual foundation for believing in absolutes.

Of course, it is not only the case that the "modern mind" believes in moral absolutes in areas where others sharply differ from them as to what those absolutes are, for example in the areas of sexuality and gender: most people who, according to Professor Trueman, are governed by how they feel will believe that smashing a baby's skull against a wall is absolutely wrong, as is all child murder and cruelty; rape is absolutely wrong; that a so-called City "fat cat" is morally wrong to embezzle money from people's pension funds; etc. And these are moral convictions which they share with many who are more "conservatively minded". My guess is that if one were to pose the questions, "Why do you believe it is wrong to smash a two-year old's skull against a wall? What are your reasons for holding this belief?" many would regard the asking of such a question as betraying a woeful lack of moral sensibility.

In any event, the discussion about whether we access moral reality through our emotions or by a reasoning process or by a combination of both is hardly an *ontological* discussion, a discussion about the *nature* of morality and the *content* of morality; rather, it is an *epistemological* one, how we come to *know* what the nature of morality is and what is the content of that morality. Lest it be said that what I *feel* is for the modern mind the answer to the ontological question, the reply must be that this cannot be the case, for if it were, those in the LGBTQ+ community could hardly have any beef with those who say that they feel that gay and trans behaviours are wrong and nor could they object to those who say that they feel that such things are disgustingly wrong.

One of the dangers facing Christians in the West today is so to focus attention on issues of sexuality and transgender – because these are being pushed to the fore in society – that we end up emphasising the differences between us and fail to identify large areas where we do agree on certain moral issues. This means two things. First, in rightly contextualising the gospel we may very easily end up doing something quite different, namely, let the world set

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feel that their sexual identity is undermined by transgenderism. I use the term 'community' as applied to this abbreviated title simply for convenience's sake and not as part of a carefully designated and defined social and cultural taxonomy.

the agenda for us. Secondly, our evangelism becomes adversarial and polemical, rather than warm and personal. To be true, there is a place for polemics and there must be confrontation in all authentic evangelism because the summons to repent inevitably entails the proposition that there are things of which a person needs to repent and, this being so, the call to repent means that their life is not right. But this being the case, it is all the more important that we seek to establish as much common contact with people on the basis of those values which, because they bear God's image and because of God's common grace, we share with them. In this connection Romans 2:14-15 are important verses, as is the reality expressed in Acts 28:2 and implied in 2 Tim. 4:13. (The fact that evil people may go from bad to worse implies that at a given point they are not as bad as they might be.) The simple fact is that anyone who spends any time on social media cannot but be struck by cocksureness and the sheer bitterness, not to say nastiness, which characterises some Christians in their engagement with unbelievers and in the way in which they write about the modern mind. I do *not* of course mean that Professor Trueman is like this – he most certainly is not; but many who may accept his analysis will find that it gives more grist to their mill as they vent their spleen and blog on.

Moreover, to return to what I said earlier about Sartre, he tied authenticity very tightly to personal choice. So why single out Rousseau at this point? Furthermore, although his teaching was radically different from the views of Rousseau and Sartre, did not Jesus emphasise the importance of our interior life? His searching words in Matthew 5:27-28 emphasise that it is not enough to avoid the outward act of adultery: this is to live no differently from the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (v. 20). Life in the kingdom of heaven demands that radical action is required to deal with one's inner attitudes (vv. 28-30). Of course, this differs markedly from the idea that all that matters is how one feels about oneself and about the world around us, and it most emphatically gives no support whatsoever to the notion that my gender is what I decide it to be. But while needing at points to be adversarial and to demolish *arguments* which set themselves up against the knowledge of God and thereby take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), in dealing with *people* is there not wisdom, not to say kindness, in acknowledging valid elements in things which those who are not Christians say and believe? Did not Paul do this, both in addressing unbelievers in Athens and in writing to Titus, on both occasions quoting from non-Christian writings something which expressed important truths (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12-13)? It is something which has characterised Professor John Lennox's engagement in public debate with unbelievers.[12]

Again, I am not suggesting for one moment that Professor Trueman would disagree with this: he clearly wants to see people brought to faith in Jesus Christ rather than simply analyse contemporary thinking. But again, social media is awash with material from Christians who are always in denunciatory mode, unable to acknowledge that grains of truth may sometimes

[12] After a debate between Professor Lennox and Australian philosopher and bioethicist Professor Peter Singer, Singer personally thanked Professor Lennox for being the first Christian who had spoken *kindly* of him in public. Professor Lennox, though disagreeing strongly with many of Professor Singer's ideas, paid tribute to certain elements in his writings where he was able to do so. I was told this in personal conversation by my good friend Lindsay Brown, who was formerly General Secretary of IFES and who, both in that role and in his subsequent work as 'evangelist at large' for IFES, was closely involved with Professor Lennox in leading student missions in Europe and in training apologist-evangelists.

be found in a pile of rubbish and that unbelievers sometimes say valid things which we need to heed.

4. The Bible and 'the soul'

I referred earlier to Professor Trueman's observation that whereas Aquinas said that the final, eternal state awaits the reuniting of body and soul, Rousseau placed all the emphasis upon the psyche. Certainly, the intermediate state, where body and soul are separate, *is* abnormal. It is not true, however, that the Bible *always* identifies the person as the body/soul unit.[13] Thus, Jesus could tell the dying thief, "Today you" – not your disembodied soul, though it was the disembodied soul – "will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paul can say, "We . . . would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8) and "I desire to depart and be with Christ" (Philipp. 1:23). Moreover, Peter can write: "I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside" (2 Pet. 1:13-14). In all these passages the essential 'I' is distinguished from the body, suggesting that the real person can be distinguished from the body at death. But not only at death: in 2 Cor. 12:2-5 Paul speaks of his "rapture" into the third heaven and paradise as something which may have occurred in the body or as an out of the body experience. One could almost think that Paul and Peter were holding a Platonic, not to say, Cartesian, view of the soul! But this must be balanced with the fact that in Acts 8:2 we read that godly men buried Stephen (not his body) and that in Matt. 28:6-7 Jesus is identified with his corpse. In other words, although the Bible teaches that the constitution of a human being is comprised of a body and soul which form a unit, it can also refer to the soul of the person as the person and the body of the person as the person. Rousseau may have got things out of kilter but so did Aquinas: in wanting to express an important truth, he – or the way Professor Trueman has represented him – did not entirely preserve the biblical balance. Even Homer nodded and so could Aquinas.

IV. *Possible response to the critical analysis offered and rejoinder to the response*

There is, of course, an obvious reply to what I have written by way of critique, and it goes as follows. In speaking of Rousseau's influence on the modern mind Professor Trueman was not denying that other thinkers have contributed to how we have got to where we are. Indeed, in his book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism and the Road to the Sexual Revolution*[14] he considers, amongst others, the ideas of Marx and Freud and how these all mesh with Rousseau's philosophy so that Rousseau produces psychological humanity, Freud understands human psychology in terms of sex and Marx politicises everything with the result that today we have sexual identity politics. Moreover,

[13] Reference, of course, to 'person' is not entirely unproblematic and the history of philosophy does not provide a unified view as to what constitutes a person. Biblically it may be wiser to speak of a 'human being, a body-soul unit in God's image which will live forever in heaven or hell' rather than of a 'person'.

[14] Illinois: Crossway, 2020

Professor Trueman was *not* saying that Rousseau was all for transgender; rather, in answering the question as to how ideas which seemed bizarre not so long ago have now become accepted as part of the "main stream", he is simply identifying Rousseau as a hugely significant figure in the trend to understand humanity in terms of inner psychology rather than in terms of objective reality. In other words, Professor Trueman is not asserting that Rousseau is the *cause* of the modern mind but, rather, that he was a key player in the matrix of ideas which have got us to where we are today.

My reply to this kind of response is along the following lines. First, I am critiquing the lecture on Rousseau, not the book which Professor Trueman wrote. Secondly, I have already drawn attention to areas in Rousseau's writing where outward objective reality trumped inner psychological feeling. In the third place – and more importantly – so many tributaries have flown into the stream of modern consciousness that it may be somewhat misleading even to identify Rousseau, Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx and Freud – as Professor Trueman does in his book – as the really decisive influences.

Fourthly – and others have made this criticism of Professor Trueman's book – to begin with Rousseau and the Romantics is surely to begin too late: Rousseau himself existed in a historical context. Of course, unless one is going to go all the way back to Adam, one has to begin somewhere, and it may be felt that Rousseau and the Romantics is as good a starting point as anywhere. But I think this to be mistaken. And I am not alone: in his magisterial work *Inventing The Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*, Larry Siedentop – who held the very first chair in intellectual history to be established in the UK – goes back to the moral revolution effected in the Graeco-Roman world as a result of the spread of the gospel by Paul and then traces matters from then to the present day.[15] And he is surely right to do so. I shall confine myself to a few comments on the problems of beginning a cultural analysis with Romanticism.

To begin with, Romanticism was something of a reaction against what had gone before: one can hardly, therefore, understand Romanticism without a measure of understanding of that against which it was reacting. The Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century had, according to the Romantic view of things, produced the ordered, classical, Augustan age which elevated reason at the expense of emotion, and mathematical ways of thinking which left little room for imagination, and where order had crushed spontaneity. Romanticism was, therefore, a cry to return to a period where "mystery" was prominent (hence the *penchant* for things medieval and Gothic); where nature was revered (think of Wordsworth's *The Prelude*); where imagination played a central role (think of the place of imagination in Coleridge's poetry, especially in "the magical triad" of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*); and where not only was truth a beautiful thing (as could be seen in Newton's inverse square law) but where beauty came to be regarded as truth (think of the closing lines of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: 'Beauty is truth . . .'). Not without good reason did the late Sir Maurice Bowra's superb, published lectures on Romanticism bear the title *The Romantic Imagination*.[16] But, as Professor Hooykaas pointed out in *Religion and the Rise of Modern*

[15] Larry Siedentop, *Inventing The Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (London: Penguin, 2015).

[16] Maurice Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: OUP, 1950).

Science,[17] both the Protestant Reformation and Puritanism, together with other influences, played an important part in the Scientific Revolution. The problem was, however, that by the eighteenth century the universe described in Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* came to be understood in purely mechanical, mechanistic terms and, in the hands of numerous leading thinkers, gave rise to Deism, where God was a kind of absentee landlord, leaving his universe to function on its own in a deterministic kind of way. Romanticism was something of a reaction to this in music, architecture and literature.

The point to observe, however, as Hooykaas explained, is that the Reformation was not only of enormous importance in allowing space to explore the world empirically, free from the constraints of the Catholic Church but – and, for present purposes, far more significantly – it asserted the importance and the conscience of the individual before God. The individual had been lost sight of in medieval Catholicism, being something of a cog in the vast machinery of the Catholic Church. Once the Reformation liberated the individual from the tyranny of the Church and sought to locate freedom as that which truly exists under the authority of Scripture, it would only be a matter of time before there would be those who would regard Scripture's authority as simply another form of tyranny and seek to be free of all constraints. This narrative, which seeks to lay the blame for the ills of modern libertarianism at the doors of the Reformation, is one which was first put to me back in 1974/75 by someone who would become a leading Roman Catholic systematic theologian and ethicist, Professor John Saward. It is, of course, the interpretation which lay behind Keble's famous Assize Day sermon on 'National Apostasy' Although I reject that Catholic interpretation – when John Saward first put this thesis before me, he was an Anglo-Catholic and chaplain of the college where I was an undergraduate – there *is* a kernel of truth to it: once people get a taste for liberty, some will want to uncouple it from Scripture and there is then no saying where things will lead.

If Professor Trueman wishes to see Rousseau, with his emphasis upon the inner life as that which determines our identity, as being one of the sources of the modern mind, then there have not been those of a Catholic mentality (whether of the Anglo or Roman varieties) who wish to see Luther's emphasis upon the individual as being the source of all the ills of the modern Western mind. Some Reformed writers see things differently. In his 2019 *magnum opus,* Professor Robert Letham identifies Descartes as a key influence on the individualism which characterises Western society: "Beginning in the Renaissance and gaining ground in the Enlightenment, the focus on the individual has become pervasive and often unrecognized. Descartes's famous search for certainty began with the assumption of the thinking self – 'I think, therefore I am.'"[18] Again, referring to Descartes's famous *cogito, ergo sum* dictum, Professor Letham writes: 'Consequently, the existence of the thinking individual became the axiomatic basis of Western thought and culture.'[19] Significantly, Rousseau is not cited in the entire 1072 page volume. (He gets only three brief references in Siedentop's work.) Thus Professor Trueman, the church historian, traces the rise of the modern mind back to Rousseau, whereas Professor Letham, the systematic and historical theologian, sees Descartes

[17] Reijer Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1972).

[18] Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Illinois: Crossway, 2019), 37.

[19] Letham, *Systematic Theology*, 762.

as the major figure. Might it not just be the case that such is the untidiness and complexity of life that it can be somewhat misleading to produce these neat taxonomies and genealogies of ideas? I think so and shall explain why.

Take Descartes, for example. He is generally and rightly viewed as the founder of modern philosophy, his dichotomising of the soul or self of the observing subject from the objective reality of the world external to the self (the body of the self-being part of that external, objective world) being an idea fundamental to modernity, as was his quest for a *method* to arrive at certain knowledge. But he cannot be understood outside of his historical context, a context in which not only were the rival claims of Roman Catholicism on the one hand and those of Reformation Christianity on the other competing but one in which the Reformation had made possible the claims made by numerous other religious groups. If the debilitating Thirty Years' War was essentially all to do with the conflict between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Descartes's beginning with the conscious human was effectively his way of saying, "A plague o' both your houses," and a way of seeking a "third way" to ascertain certain knowledge. One cannot leapfrog the Renaissance to Descartes and ignore the most momentous turning point in thought between the Renaissance and the "modern" period, namely the Reformation. And although the Reformation sought to put God, rather than the Church, at the centre of things (locating authority in Scripture, not in the Church), it unleashed certain forces, one of which was to thrust the individual into a prominence not seen in the West for well over a thousand years.

Much more could be said about this, but I must draw this critique to a close.

V. *Why does all this matter?*

The origin and influence of ideas is an intrinsically fascinating subject. If one thinks that a presentation of how we have got to where we are may have oversimplified things, then it is not a work of supererogation to say so. But that would hardly justify a critique of this length of just one lecture which lasted no more than an hour.

The reason why this matters supremely is that there is another way of analysing where we are at, and it is found in the Bible. Romans 1:18-32 surely is the explanation of things. Without in any way minimising the value of tracing how ideas in one generation may have enormous influence in a later generation, might it just be that what some Christians regard as the disturbing and bewildering shift that has taken place with respect to things like gender fluidity is not at all bewildering or surprising to those who have Romans 1 open before them, or even the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis? Romans 1:18 states that those who hold (or hold down) the truth about God which, verses 19-20 tell us, God has revealed to us are godless and wicked people and God's wrath is *revealed* or *is being revealed* against such behaviour. The result of not glorifying God and being thankful to him is that human thinking becomes futile, and foolish hearts are darkened: it is quite inevitable. The result is that *the* most important distinction which exists – that between the Creator and the creature – is obliterated as people, claiming to be wise but becoming fools, start worshipping created things (vv. 22-23). The result of this is that God in his wrath removes certain restraints and

hands people over to their sinful desires. There is a divine logic in this: since the distinction between male and female is fundamental to humans as God's image bearers and since this distinction lies at the base of sexual intercourse expressed in marriage, the sex drive becomes twisted so that, instead of becoming the expression of love between a man and his wife, it becomes an impure end in itself simply to be indulged at whim. This is what vv. 24-25 are saying. Sex is worshipped and people believe a lie *not* because of what Freud wrote but because of what God does in his wrath.

Anyone who takes the trouble to read about sexual behaviour in the classical world of ancient Greece will be left with no doubt that sex in all shapes and forms – pederasty being regarded by many as *the* ideal of love - was being worshipped long before Freud came on the scene. Indeed, one does not have to read far into the book of Genesis before one sees the same thing. The fact that Leviticus chapter 18 deals with incest, homosexual sex and bestiality demonstrates that the breaking down of sexual boundaries is something which has characterised many societies and is but the outworking of what we read in Romans 1:18-32. Indeed, verses 26-27 deal with same sex behaviour. Contrary to what is often wrongly assumed, Paul does not teach that this is the nadir of human sinful behaviour: in vv. 28-32 he lists many "respectable sins". Moreover, bearing in mind Leviticus 18 and the ancient world, it may not be amiss to point out that gender fluidity is not the end of the road of aberrant approaches to human sexuality: paedophilia, incest and bestiality may yet become normalised, though, if Peter Singer's influence persists, bestiality will not be accepted without a fight and that from one of the most secular ethicists of our time.

Moreover, it should also be pointed out that we have not yet reached the end of the road with transgender. At present what drives transgender may well be that someone feels that they are in the wrong body. But I can easily envisage the time when someone will feel that they are in the right body but that they wish to transition for the sheer fun of it and to try out new sexual experiences. Thus, it will *not* be their view of their sexual identity which is the driving force but, rather, their desire for different sexual experiences. Have we not already seen a difference between those who have said that they have always felt gay and those who have insisted the exact opposite: that they are making a choice to be that way? Why may not the same thing happen in the realm of transgender?

What I am trying to say is this, materialism is a form of idolatry. Now, it may well be possible to trace the rise of "economic humanity" and attribute materialism in the modern world to the influence of certain forces and certain thinkers. But materialism has *always* been an idol: think of the rich young ruler who went away sad from Jesus; think of the rich fool in our Lord's story; think of the Pharisees who loved money. The danger in listening to analyses of modern culture, interesting though such things may be, is not only that alternative analyses might be given (I have sought to do that in this critique) but that one misses the really big thing, which is this: God in his wrath hands people over to their sinful desires. He may well use certain thinkers to loosen the restraints on people, just as he used military and political leaders to wreak judgment on his ancient people and other nations. But ultimately it is the Lord who does this as an expression of his wrath. And this being so, there is only one remedy to the situation, and it is that to which Paul refers in Romans 1:16-17: the gospel of God. That

gospel was the means of transforming the thought patterns and lifestyles of many in the ancient world. As the capital of Christian belief has steadily drained away from much of Western society and culture, it is quite inevitable that the interest of Christian behaviour which resulted from that capital has also been massively reduced. Only a spiritual awakening on the scale of that which happened in the eighteenth century can possibly reverse this downward spiral. But Professor Trueman is not really that enamoured with eighteenth-century evangelicalism.[20] But that is another story.

About the Author

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[20] Carl Trueman, 'J.I. Packer: An English Nonconformist Perspective' in Timothy George (Ed.), *J.I. Packer and the Evangelical Future: The Impact of his Life and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

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HERMAN DOOYEWEERD'S CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

Steve Bishop

Abstract

Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) was one of the foremost philosophers of the Netherlands. He developed a Christian philosophy based on the approach of Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper. In this article, I provide a brief introduction to Dooyeweerd and outline the contours of his Christian philosophy. His philosophy was unique in that it started with the creator and his laws, rather than thought, reason, common sense, observation, logic or any other created aspect.

I. *Introduction*

Recent years have seen a resurgence in Abraham Kuyper studies. Kuyper's legacy continues. One person who developed Kuyper's views is Herman Dooyeweerd (7 October 1894 – 12 February 1977). Dooyeweerd was a Calvinist philosopher at the Free University, the university that Kuyper founded in 1881 (now known as the VU University Amsterdam).

Dooyeweerd is described as one of the foremost philosophers of the Netherlands. Paul B. Cliteur, president of the "Humanist League" in The Netherlands and professor of philosophy at the Technical University of Delft, wrote in 1994 in the newspaper *Trouw*:

> *Herman Dooyeweerd is undoubtedly the greatest Dutch philosopher of the twentieth century (...) a philosopher of international proportions.*[1]

G.E. Langemeijer, the attorney general of the Dutch Appeal Court and chairman of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences, also wrote in the newspaper *Trouw* that Dooyeweerd was "the most original philosopher Holland has ever produced, even Spinoza not excepted".[2] Giorgio Del Vecchio, an Italian neo-Kantian philosopher, viewed Dooyeweerd as "the most profound, innovative, and penetrating philosopher since Kant".[3] More recently, philosopher Alvin Plantinga stated, "Dooyeweerd's work was comprehensive, insightful, profound, courageous, and quite properly influential".[4] And yet, despite this applause, he is still a largely unfamiliar name.

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[1] "Bijlage Letter en Geest" *Trouw*, (9 November 1994),19. This was on the occasion of Dooyeweerd's centenary.

[2] G.E. Langemeijer, "An Assessment of Herman Dooyeweerd", in L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1975), 10-13.

[3] As cited in John Witte Jr, "Introduction", in Dooyeweerd, H. *A Christian Theory of Social Institutions* (La Jolla, CA: The Herman Dooyeweerd Foundation, 1986), 14-15.

[4] Alvin Plantinga, "Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century" In Sander Griffioen & Bert Balk (eds.), *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century* (Kampen: Kok, 1995):30; also in James Sennett (ed.) *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998):329.

Dooyeweerd developed, influenced by Kuyper, an integral Christian philosophy. For it to be a Christian philosophy Dooyeweerd maintains that it must abandon the autonomy of, and self-sufficiency of, reason. As Dooyeweerd stated in 1936:

> *Still quite young, the new [approach] has ventured to put forward a basic thesis by which it squarely opposes the traditional attitude of thought. It is this: philosophical theoretical thought is not self-sufficient in its own domain. The gist of this thesis is in the italicized words. They signify not only a radical break with the basic idea of modern humanism of the sovereignty of thought, but also a complete departure from the traditional synthetic standpoint of halfway Christian philosophy.* [5]

Christian philosophy's starting point is "creation, fall, and redemption through Jesus Christ in communion with the Holy Spirit" and not in reason and rationality.[6] Part of the neglect of Dooyeweerd is the disbelief that such an entity as a Christian philosophy could exist. For many, Christian philosophy is an oxymoron. Before addressing this important issue, in what follows I hope to show what Dooyeweerd's attempt to develop a Christian philosophy looks like.[7]

Dooyeweerd was the pioneer of the school of "the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea" (PCI) or more simply Reformational philosophy.[8] He originally described it as Calvinistic philosophy, but later used the term Christian to identify it.[9]

It is little known in Britain, but slightly more known in North America – partly as a result of the large Dutch immigration. Its systematic nature and the fact that a vast majority of works were written in Dutch (at least initially) has prevented it making much impact in the UK.[10]

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[5] Herman Dooyeweerd, "The Dilemma for Christian Philosophical Thought and the Critical Character of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea", *Philosophia Reformata,* 83(2)(2018), 267.

[6] Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture* (Toronto: Wedge, 1963), 28.

[7] In what follows I will draw upon some material from my "The (lack) of reception of Reformational ideas by English Calvinists: a Philosophical Enquiry. *D.Phil Thesis* (Potchefstroom, SA: North-West University, 2019).

[8] In Dutch it is known as the De Wijsbegeerte der Wetside (WdW). The term "philosophy of the cosmonomic idea" was suggested by Bernard Zylstra – see Dooyeweerd, "The Dilemma", 267, fn1.

[9] Herman Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration," in *The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd Series B Volume 1*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 3. It has also been described as the Amsterdam philosophy, to designate its geographical origins.

[10] Several secondary sources are available which provide a useful introduction to Reformational philosophy and to Dooyeweerd's thought, these include:

J.M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1973).

L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought.* (Wedge: Toronto, 1975).

Roy A. Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1991).

Yong Joon Choi, "Dialogue and Antithesis: A Philosophical Study on the Significance of Herman Dooyeweerd's Transcendental Critique" PhD Thesis (Potchefstroome universiteit vir Christelike Hoer Onderways, 2000).

D.F.M. Strauss, *The Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 2021) – an earlier version of this is accessible at: https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Strauss/DFMS2015Dooyeweerd.pdf.

Willem Ouweneel, *Wisdom for Thinkers* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 2014).

Andree Troost, *What is Reformational Philosophy? An Introduction to the Cosmonomic Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 2012).

Dooyeweerd acknowledges Kuyper's "great and continuing influence".[11] For Dooyeweerd, Kuyper's greatest contribution was "to set the principle of sovereignty in its own sphere against the state absolutism that was dominant" in his time.[12] It was this notion of sphere sovereignty that Dooyeweerd developed along philosophical lines. He argues:

> *The way in which Kuyper worked it out was not theoretically or philosophically thought through.*[13]

In his "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration" he pays tribute to Kuyper and emphasises: "Kuyper penetrated beyond the theological and philosophical issues of the day to the deepest and absolutely central spiritual forces that set human life and thought in motion".[14]

It is worth noting that Dooyeweerd never regarded his work as the last word in philosophy:

> *It has been said so many times that repeating it almost becomes boring: The Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea does not pretend infallibility either in respect of its positive philosophical conceptions or with regard to its critique on traditional philosophy.*[15]

A Reformed philosophy can only be *philosophia reformanda*. Dooyeweerd was not the only one involved in the development of Reformational philosophy. Another fundamental thinker was his brother-in-law D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) and a schoolteacher, Antheunis Janse (1890-1960).[16]

Rudi Hayward, *Tasks and Cosmos: An Introduction to Reformational Philosophy.* Available at https://www.academia.edu/43145475/Tasks_and_Cosmos_An_Introduction_to_Reformational_Philosophy.

Colin Wright, "Any Questions: Dooyeweerd Made Easy. (Well easier…)" *Christianity & Society* 9(1) (1999) 21-27.

[11] Herman Dooyeweerd, "The Last Interview of Dooyeweerd", in van Dunné, J.M., Boeles P., and Heerma van Voss, A.J., (eds.) *Acht Civilisten in Burger* (Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, 1977) (Translated by Dr. J. Glenn Friesen), 38-67). Though he does acknowledge some departures from Kuyper's more scholastic traits: Herman Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science", in S. Bishop and J. Kok (eds.) *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work & Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2013), 153-178.

[12] Dooyeweerd, "The last interview", 49. On Kuyper's sphere sovereignty see Steve Bishop "Abraham Kuyper: Cultural Transformer" *Foundations* 79 (November 2020): 60-76.

[13] Herman Dooyeweerd, "Interview of Herman Dooyeweerd by Magnus Verbrugge dated September 23, 1974" (Translated by J.G. Friesen, 2007).

[14] Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration", 3.

[15] Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science",154.

[16] B.J. van der Walt, "Antheunis Janse of Biggekerke (1890-1960): Morning Star of a Reformational Worldview" in S. Bishop (ed.) *Like the First Gleam of Dawn: A Bennie van der Walt Reader* (Potchefstroom: ICCA), Ch. 12. See also Chris Gousmett, "Janse's Anthropology and the Development of Modal Theory" in *In a Reformational Key: Papers Presented in Thankfulness of the Life, Work and Vision of Duncan L. Roper* (Wellington: Reformational Christian Studies Trust, 2020). Some of English translations of Janse's work are available at https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/janse.htm.

II. *A brief biography*

Dooyeweerd was born on 7th October 1894 in Amsterdam to Hermen Dooijeweerd (1850-1919), an accountant, and Maria Christina Spaling (1862-1948).[17] Dooyeweerd's father was greatly influenced by Abraham Kuyper, consequently Dooyeweerd, from a young age, was soon immersed in Kuyperian thought and neo-Calvinism. He would have heard Kuyper's newspaper articles read aloud at home and he attended the Gereformeerde Gymnasium in Amsterdam whose headmaster, Dr J. Woltjer (1849-1917) was an associate of Kuyper.[18]

In 1912 Dooyeweerd started attending the Vrije Universiteit (VU Universiteit Amsterdam) in Amsterdam where he studied law. However, he was disappointed with the VU as he expected to get a good grounding in the Kuyperian worldview[19] (the VU had been founded in 1880 by Kuyper, and in Dooyeweerd's time, there were only three faculties).[20] In 1917 Dooyeweerd received his doctorate for a thesis entitled: "De Ministerraad in het Nederlandsche Staaatsrecht" ("The Cabinet of Ministers under Dutch Constitutional Law"), supervised by D. Fabius (1851-1931).

He then took up the post of assistant inspector in the tax office in Friesland.[21] In 1918 he moved to Leiden where he acted as an assistant to a municipal councillor. He was then asked to become the deputy head of the Public Health department in The Hague.

During this time, he studied legal philosophy independently. He found there were many conflicts between the different approaches to legal philosophy and this made him convinced there was a need for a "genuinely Christian and biblically based insight and foundation".[22]

In 1920 Dooyeweerd began to correspond with his brother-in-law D.H.Th. Vollenhoven – who was also a graduate of the Vrije Universiteit and had married Dooyeweerd's sister in 1918[23]. In these correspondences, Dooyeweerd expressed a desire to "work out the philosophical foundations of science and of developing a theistic position, along Calvinist lines".[24]

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[17] For a helpful, full intellectual biography of Dooyeweerd see Magnus Verburg, *Herman Dooyeweerd: The Life and Work of a Christian Philosopher*. Translated and edited by Herbert Donald Morton and Harry van Dyke (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 2015).

[18] Woltjer in 1881 became one of the professors at the VU. On Woltjer see Rob Nijhoff, *De Logosfilosofie Van Jan Woltjer (1849-1917): Logos En Wijsbegeerte Aan De Vroege Vrije Universiteit.* Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2014. Dutch with English summary.

[19] Dooyeweerd, "Last Interview", 38.

[20] *Ibid.*, 38.

[21] Verburg, Herman Dooyeweerd, 18.

[22] Herman Dooyeweerd Jr., "Herman Dooyeweerd – A Biographical Sketch", in H. Dooyeweerd, *Christian Philosophy and the Meaning of History* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 107.

[23] On Vollenhoven see, for example, A. Tol, *Philosophy in the Making. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven and the Emergence of Reformed Philosophy* (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2010); A. Tol, "Reformational Philosophy in the Making," *Philosophia Reformata* 76 (2011), pp. 187–215; Jeremy Ive, "The Contribution and Philosophical Development of the Reformational Philosopher, Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven", *Philosophia Reformata* 80(2) (2015), 159–177. B.J. van der Walt "The Philosophy of D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) with Special Reference to his Histography of Philosophy", in Steve Bishop (ed.) *Like the First Gleam of Dawn: A Bennie van der Walt Reader.* (Potchefstroom: ICCA), 267-296.

[24] Roger Henderson, *Illuminating Law,* (Amsterdam: Free University, 1994), 27.

In May 1921 Vollenhoven became a pastor in The Hague and this gave the two more time to talk together and develop their ideas. During this time Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven made a "discovery",[25] which helped to set them on what Vollenhoven describes as a "more Scriptural way of thinking".[26]

In October 1922 the newly founded research institute of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the party associated with Kuyper, appointed Dooyeweerd as the first director. This gave Dooyeweerd the time and opportunity to develop his philosophical ideas. He married Jantiena Wilhelmina Fernhout on 19th September 1924.

While working at the "Kuyper Institute", reading one of Kuyper's meditations on Pentecost, Dooyeweerd "discovered" a new Kuyper. In a 1973 interview, Dooyeweerd comments:

> *I was working in Kuyper's old office, sitting at his enormous old desk, I noticed a stack of little booklets. I picked the first one that came to hand, which was Kuyper's meditations about Pentecost. I would never have picked up such booklets to read earlier in my life, but I thought to myself that I should take a look at what he made of such meditations. I started to read and four hours later I was still there! I was so moved by what Kuyper had to say in these meditations that I realized that this was a completely different Kuyper from the one I knew from his theological works. In theology he is scholastic but not at all in these meditations.*[27]

Dooyeweerd was struck by Kuyper's account of the role of the heart as the religious centre of human existence: "What really gripped me was that Kuyper had rediscovered the Biblical truth that the centre of our human existence lies in our heart, something that had been completely lost in scholasticism."[28] He goes on to note the great effect this revelation had on him:

> *I can say that this discovery was a turning point in my life. When I began to dwell on this idea, I realized that this insight would mean a complete overturning of my view of humanity and of the whole of reality in which we live, since all reality comes to a concentrated focal point only in our humanity.*[29]

It was also during this time Dooyeweerd developed the idea of the religious root of theoretical thought – the idea that all the sciences are dependent on pre-theoretical presuppositions (ultimately, religious presuppositions rooted in the human heart). Kuyper's mainly social vision was developed into an (ontological) account of the whole of reality with the philosophical rigour Kuyper was unable to give it.[30]

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[25] Henderson, *Illuminating Law*.

[26] Cited in Tol, *Philosophy in the Making*, 367. Henderson, *Illuminating Law,* 30-50 and Tol *op.cit,* 364-369 both discuss this "discovery" but do not identify what it could be.

[27] *Dooyeweerd, "IKOR Television Interview" 16 May 1973, Media Room, Vrije Universiteit". (Translated by J. Van Meggelen, 2004).*

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] Ive, 2012; 2015.

Dooyeweerd worked for the "Kuyper Institute" for four profitable years. He edited the *Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde* (ARS), the journal of the Kuyper Foundation and published numerous papers in it, fifteen of which (from the period 1924-1927) formed the basis of *The Struggle for a Christian Politics*.[31] Here he sought to show how a Calvinist worldview can shape political thought.

> *Despite shared Christian beliefs a difference in world views must also lead to difference in political thought.*[32]

> *Skepticism about the all-embracing Calvinist worldview – and therefore also about a Calvinist understanding of politics – is not limited to historians who study John Calvin (...) I shall attempt to demonstrate to these skeptics why they are wrong and I shall show that Calvinism as a worldview does have a distinctive starting point which determines an independent approach and an independent method of operation in every area of thought and action.*[33]

Surprisingly, he doesn't start his demonstration from the sovereignty of God but rather from his notion of a "law-idea":

> *I want to demonstrate that the organon of Calvinism as a worldview is only to be found in its specific idea of law, that is, in its particular conception of a universal law of God that underlies all that exists, including human thought and action, in which all specific ordinances are anchored and determined.*[34]

Dooyeweerd later reluctantly accepted an offer to become the professor of law at the VU succeeding Willem Zevenbergen.[35] Yet it was a position he held for 40 years until his retirement in 1965 at 70. Dooyeweerd's purpose at the VU was to teach "Introduction to the Science of Law", the "History of traditional Dutch law" and "Jurisprudence". Dooyeweerd later replaced the "Introduction" with an "Encyclopaedia of Legal Science".

It was at the VU that Dooyeweerd completed his *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (1935-36). This was translated into English from 1953 to 1958 as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. This translation contained extensive revisions of and additions to the Dutch text. His next planned project was *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy* and then the *Encyclopaedia of Legal Science.*[36] He was not able to complete these fully during his lifetime. He co-founded the Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte (VCW) (Association of Calvinistic Philosophy) and was editor in chief (1936-1976) of its journal *Philosophia Reformata*.

After the Second World War, he travelled extensively to Switzerland, South Africa, France, Belgium, the United States – several times to Harvard University – and Canada. It was the

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[31] Herman Dooyeweerd, *The Struggle for a Christian Politics: An Essay in Grounding the Calvinistic Worldview in its Law-Idea. Collected Works Series B, Volume 5* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008.

[32] *Ibid.*, 1.

[33] *Ibid., 1-2.*

[34] *Ibid.*, 3.

[35] Dooyeweerd, "last Interview", 42.

[36] *Ibid.,* 53-54.

lectures during one of the tours to North America that formed the basis of *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (1960). He never lectured in the UK, this may be one reason why he is not more well-known there. Francis Schaeffer who imbibed much of Dooyeweerd, via Hans Rookmaaker, was more widely known in the UK.[37]

Dooyeweerd was a prolific author and wrote around 200 articles and books. The last article he wrote was for *Philosophia Reformata* in 1975.[38] In 1948 he was inducted into the Royal Academy of Dutch Sciences.

The two main influences on Dooyeweerd were Dutch neo-Calvinism and contemporary German philosophy.[39] A few observations on the latter will suffice before outlining Dooyeweerd's philosophical approach in a little more detail.

The main German philosophical influences were neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. Dooyeweerd writes: "originally I was strongly under the influence first of Kantian philosophy, later on of Husserl's phenomenology".[40] Of the neo-Kantians Dooyeweerd had "particular affinities" with Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) of the Heidelberg school. This is particularly visible in the distinction between norms and laws of nature.[41]

The neo-Calvinist influence on Dooyeweerd is more marked. This is particularly visible in his emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the necessary distinction between creator and creation and his development of Kuyper's theory of sphere sovereignty.

III. *Key Dooyeweerdian themes*

1. Biblical contours of Reformational philosophy

Dooyeweerd's main work is the four-volume text *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. The main thesis of the first volume is that "an intrinsic connection exists between a philosopher's theoretical activity and his religious faith".[42] The subsequent volumes developed a systematic philosophy based on the Christian framework of creation, fall and redemption.

Several themes dominate his Reformational philosophy most of these arising out of the sovereignty of God, sphere sovereignty and the necessary distinction between creator and creation.

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[37] On the role of Rookmaaker in the UK and his influence on Schaeffer, see Steve Bishop, "A History of the Reformational Movement in Britain. II: The post-World War II Years to the end of the Twentieth Century", *Koers* 81(1) (2016), 51-67. http://dx.doi.org/10.19108/koers.81.1.2251.

[38] A full chronological bibliography of Dooyeweerd's work has been compiled by Harry Van Dyke "A Dooyeweerd Bibliography" (available at: https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/dooyeweerd-bibliography. Date of access 19 May 2020).

[39] Albert M. Wolters, "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd", in C.T. McIntire (ed.), *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 2-15.

[40] Dooyeweerd, *New Critique* Vol. 1, v.

[41] Wolters, "The Intellectual Milieu of Herman Dooyeweerd", 12.

[42] D.H. Freeman "A New School of Christian Philosophy", *Journal of Religion*, 38 (1958), 46.

2. The sovereignty of God

It was Abraham Kuyper who declared: "there is not a single square inch of the entire cosmos of which Christ the sovereign Lord of all does not say, 'This is mine'". This sums up the motivation of Reformational philosophy: to reassert the lordship of Christ in every area of life. God's sovereignty means that he is lord of all including art, history, philosophy, theology, business, politics, mathematics, science and so forth. In Clouser's terms, this is expressed by stating the "principle of pan-creation".[43] Everything apart from God is created; this means that nothing is independent of God but is on the contrary subjected to his sovereignty.

3. Sphere sovereignty

Dooyeweerd saw that one of Kuyper's greatest contributions was the notion of sphere sovereignty. Kuyper's notion of sphere sovereignty was a social one; Dooyeweerd developed it philosophically (ontologically). Dooyeweerd's development of sphere sovereignty is perhaps better called modal irreducibility[44] in that none of the fifteen modal aspects (see below) he identified within reality can be reduced to another. No aspect should be regarded as the only real or genuine aspect; no aspect should be regarded as making possible or actual the existence of other aspects. This reflects the biblical teaching that all creatures depend on God directly and equally.

4. Law as the boundary between Creator and creation

In Reformational philosophy, a strong emphasis is placed on the idea of law. So much so that it is sometimes called the philosophy of the law idea, or cosmonomic philosophy. For Dooyeweerd, there is a law side and a factual side to reality. Dooyeweerd saw the law as the boundary between God and his creation. This is sometimes interpreted as a kind of barrier preventing the Christian from "reaching out" to God. It should be remembered, however, that (no matter what limitations are intrinsic to the creational status) nothing prevents God from "reaching" his creatures, hearing them, knowing them and so forth. The law is a boundary for creatures, not for God. God transcends the law; he does not violate it though he is not subjected to his own laws. This idea was aptly summed up in Latin in the Calvinian motto: *Deus legibus solutus est sed non exlex* (God is not subjected to laws but is not law-less).

5. Archimedean points, immanent and transcendent philosophies

Archimedes placed so much faith in the principle of the lever that he is reported to have asserted "give me a place to stand and I will move the world". In Reformational circles, this place is called the Archimedean point. All philosophies need an "Archimedean point", a point of reference from which to base their ultimate support. According to Dooyeweerd, two

[43] Clouser, *Myth*, 241.

[44] See, for example, Clouser, *Myth,* 241.

fundamental classes of philosophy can be distinguished: the immanent and the transcendent ones. Immanence philosophies place their Archimedean point within philosophy or creation; transcendent philosophies place it outside philosophy and creation.

An example may help in clarifying the distinction. Immanence philosophers include Descartes and Kant. Their starting points were thought and reason – both thought and reason are created. Reformational philosophy is a transcendent philosophy, its Archimedean point is Christ, who is the source and sustainer of all things. Immanence philosophies are inherently reductionist in nature; i.e. they are inclined to "deify" an aspect of creation by making it self-existent.

6. The role of religious presuppositions

One of the main themes of Dooyeweerd's approach is that all thought is based on presuppositions that are inherently religious in character. In the 1935 Foreword to *De Wijsbegerte der Wetsidee* republished in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* he writes: The great turning point in my thought was marked by the discovery of the religious root of thought itself.[45] This is Dooyeweerd's transcendental critique: religious presuppositions are inherent in all theorising. If this is the case, then Christian philosophy is valid and necessary. Dooyeweerd has called this the "entrance" to his philosophy. Elsewhere he commented:

> *The "transcendental critique of theoretical thought," which is the key to understanding the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, aims to serve the purpose of this dialogue. It is also the means by which this philosophy seeks to approach the diametrically opposed camps of philosophy in terms of their own respective deepest spiritual backgrounds.*[46]

Dooyeweerd developed two forms of *transcendental critique*. The first, developed in his *De Wijsbegerte der Wetsidee,* sought to show that it was in the nature of philosophy, dealing with the integrality and totality of reality, to depend on ultimate religious presuppositions. To avoid some objections to this first approach he developed his second way: this time rather than focusing on philosophical thought he showed that all theoretical thought depended on ultimate religious presuppositions.

Dooyeweerd's approach is transcendent in that it sees everything in creation pointing back to its origin, to the will of the sovereign creator God. Nothing, including thought and thinking, is self-sufficient; as Dooyeweerd put it "meaning is the being of all that has been created; it is religiously rooted and is of divine Origin".[47] All things are dependent on a God-given ordered reality. This reality manifests itself in experience.

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[45] Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, Vol. 1, v

[46] Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration", 4. In this work he takes pains to distance himself from Kant's "transcendental critique of knowledge" and from Edmund Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological critique.

[47] Dooyeweerd, "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration", 37.

7. The nature of theoretical and pre-theoretical thought

Naïve thought is pre-theoretical thought – everyday experience. Many scholars underestimate pre-theoretical thought, but not Dooyeweerd. For Dooyeweerd, pre-theoretical thought or naïve experience is important. It takes in reality, its richness and diversity, as a whole. There is no contradiction between naïve experience and theoretical thought. Theoretical thought is based on pre-theoretical thought. Theoretical thought studies reality from the point of view of one (or a few) of the modal aspects (see table 1 below); pre-theoretical thought experiences the modal aspects as a whole, fully integrated in things and events.[48]

8. The nature and relation of theology and philosophy

For Dooyeweerd philosophy does not arise from theology. It is not a theological basis that makes a philosophy Christian. He makes a clear distinction between Christian philosophy and theology.[49] Both theology and philosophy, according to Dooyeweerd, arise out of what he terms "ground-motives". Christian philosophy is not theology and philosophy is not merely non-Christian theology. Theology is one of the special sciences, such as physics, mathematics, law or sociology; theology has the faith aspect as its entry point to the study of reality. In the same way as sociology, as a special science, cannot provide a total view of reality, neither can theology. Theology does not give a total view of reality or the relation between the special sciences and so must be a special science.

Theology, like all of the special sciences, needs a philosophical foundation. Philosophy can provide theoretical insight into the inner structure and mutual coherence of the different modal aspects. The question is, will the chosen philosophy be subject to a biblical or a non-biblical religious starting point?[50] Non-Christian philosophical views cannot be rendered harmless by theological or ecclesiastical accommodation – such as Thomism tried with Aristotelianism. In response to the question: "just what is philosophy"? Dooyeweerd responded:

> *I believe that a responsible position on philosophy assumes a basic vision of the whole reality, or the totality of reality. While specific sciences only show us certain aspects of our reality, which can undoubtedly be differentiated, none can tackle the totality of our reality.*[51]

Theologians who deny the possibility of a "biblically-founded philosophy" inevitably take their philosophical presuppositions from "autonomous" philosophy. This has the consequence of inadvertently importing non-biblical concepts into theology, such as the immortality of the soul or the notion that humans are spirits, with a soul imprisoned in the body. According to Dooyeweerd, a certain philosophy cannot be "more" (or less) biblical than

[48] See, for example, Dooyeweerd, *New Critique* Vol 1, 3, 33, 39.

[49] Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1960).

[50] Dooyeweerd uses the term ground-motive (see below).

[51] Herman Dooyeweerd, "IKOR Television Interview", 4.

another – the biblical position is either accepted or not.[52] This does not mean that there are no elements of truth in these philosophies, but the total view which they present is ruled by religious basic motives that are not biblical.

9. Modal aspects

In an endeavour to describe the unity and diversity of reality, Dooyeweerd identified fifteen different modal aspects or law spheres.[53] With some justification Strauss, citing a comment Dooyeweerd made, has described the theory of modal aspects as "the best known but least understood part of Dooyeweerd's philosophy".[54]

Each thing (entity) that exists is subjected to all God's laws and functions (either as object or subject – see below) in each of these modal aspects. Each of the modal aspects has certain laws or norms associated with it. In order of earlier to later, these modal aspects are: numerical, spatial, kinematic, physical, biotic, sensitive, analytical, cultural, linguistic, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical and pistic/certitudinal (see Table 1 below). All of these dimensions are present in reality and none can be reduced to another, i.e. they are irreducible.

These modal aspects can be illustrated, for example, in the simple task of buying a bottle of wine. A theologian might ask: should a Christian buy and drink alcohol? He may want to discuss the issue from the point of view of faith. Why do I want a bottle of wine? Is it to drown my sorrows or is it to use in the breaking of bread at a church service? Is it to drink it to the glory of God? If an ethicist were watching, he might ask: where is the best place to buy the wine; should I buy fair trade wine, is it better to pay more for a wine that is produced without oppressing the workforce? A jurist might discuss the times when it is legal to buy the bottle and ask whether it is legitimate that so much of the price of a bottle of wine (in the UK) is tax. An aesthetician would consider the size and shape of the bottle and the colour and smell of the wine, or the way it is packaged. An economist might be primarily interested in the cost and value of the bottle. A sociologist looking on might consider the impact of alcohol on society and she might also look at the interaction between the shopkeeper and the buyer. The ways of communicating between the customers and the shopkeeper would come under consideration by the linguist. A psychologist might think about what drives some people to want a drink of wine and what motivates the shopkeeper to please the customer?[55]

The bottle of wine itself also has several aspects: there are a certain number of bottles on the shelf, each takes up a certain amount of space, and the wine in the bottle could be described by a chemical formula and analysed using chemical analyses, but of course it is more than that; the wine stays on the shelf because it obeys the laws of motion explored by Isaac Newton and so on.

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[52] See, for example, Herman Dooyeweerd *In the Twilight of Western Thought,* 155.

[53] Dooyeweerd, *New Critique,* II, 3-426.

[54] D.F.M. Strauss, "The Best Known but Least Understood Part of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy", *Journal for Christian Scholarship*, 42(1&2) (2006):61-80.

[55] With apologies to Calvin Seerveld for adapting his cigar illustration (Seerveld, 1985:46-47) which he in turn borrowed from Dooyeweerd *Encyclopedia of the Science of Law. Collected Works A Vol 8* (Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2012), 13-15.

Clouser notes that these modal aspects were arrived at by taking every large-scale kind of properties and laws which has been distinguished in the history of philosophy and science.[56] They are not identified in an arbitrary manner. Their order is also significant: the later modes presuppose the earlier. For example, the economic mode presupposes a social and a lingual mode. Without the social mode then there is no purpose for an economic mode, and without a lingual mode how could economic values be communicated? This is not to suggest that the later modes are more important or that the earlier modes are more fundamental. The earlier modes are "foundational" for the latter. Each mode equally depends on God.

Each modal aspect – among other things – is characterised by the following:

- a meaning nucleus or modal kernel – these indicate the core nature of each aspect. Table 1 indicates these kernels;
- a law side – this is God's ordinances or laws for creation;
- a factual or subject side – which is the totality of created reality subject to God's laws i.e. the cosmos; and
- relations with the other modal aspects in terms of anticipatory and retrocipatory analogies (anticipations and retrocipations).[57]

[56] Clouser, *Myth*, 205.

[57] The modal kernels express themselves in what Dooyeweerd terms *analogical moments*. These can be retrocipations or anticipations. If the kernel referred to is part of a preceding aspect then it is a retrocipation; if it refers to the kernel of a successive aspect then it is known as an anticipation. For example, the meaning kernel of the sensitive aspect is feelings. Emotion refers to the mode of movement and is thus a retrocipation to the movement aspect. Moral feelings are an anticipation to the moral aspect (Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight*, 7-9).

TABLE 1. The kernels of each modal aspect.

Modal aspect	**Modal kernel**
Numerical	Quantity
Spatial	Continuous extension
Kinematic	Motion
Physical	Energy and matter
Biotic	Life and vitality
Sensitive	Feeling
Analytical	Distinction
Historical	Formative power
Linguistic	Symbolic representation
Social	Social intercourse
Economic	Frugality
Aesthetic	Harmony
Juridical	What is due
Ethical	Love (self-giving)
Pistic/ certitudinal	Faith and vision

Strauss identifies several misunderstandings that are prevalent regarding these modal aspects, including the following:[58]

- Aspects are sometimes viewed as "cuts" or "layers" within reality, in the sense that they are seen as a way in which reality could be "divided".
- Aspects are interpreted by some as mere properties of entities.
- Aspects are sometimes regarded as mental constructs.
- Aspects are confused by some as the fields of study of the various disciplines (Strauss, 2006a:61-62).

To this we could also add:

- The aspects are seen in terms of lower and higher. This implies some aspects are more important than others, this is not the case, all are equally important. Basden suggests using the description earlier and later to avoid this type of misconception.[59]
- That the aspects are seen only as a checklist.

Basden notes that the aspects can provide insight when asking questions such as when considering some entity or theory, for example, which aspect does it focus on as being

[58] Strauss, "The Best Known but Least Understood Part of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy".

[59] Andrew Basden, *Foundations of Practice and Research: Adventures with Dooyeweerd's Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2020), 55.

meaningful? Does it do that to the detriment of the other aspects? Which aspects are ignored or minimised?[60]

10. Qualifying functions

Each entity has one aspect that is so important that it characterises it; this is called its qualifying function. The grey bar in Figure 1 represents this qualifying function in the societal structures. The qualifying function for animals is sensory; for plants, biotic; for rocks physical. In other words, the qualifying function is the highest aspect in which an entity functions actively or as a "subject".[61]

[60] Basden, *Foundations of Practice and Research*, 101.

[61] This is obviously a broad classification; some suggests that animals may function at higher modes e.g. Hendrik Hart, *Understanding our World: An Integral Ontology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), 181; and Uko Zylstra, suggests that some single-celled organisms cannot be classed as animals or plants, Uko Zylstra, "Dooyeweerd's Concept of Classification in Biology" in *Life is Religion: Essays in Honor of H. Evan Runner*. (St Catherine's: Paideia, 1981), 235-248.

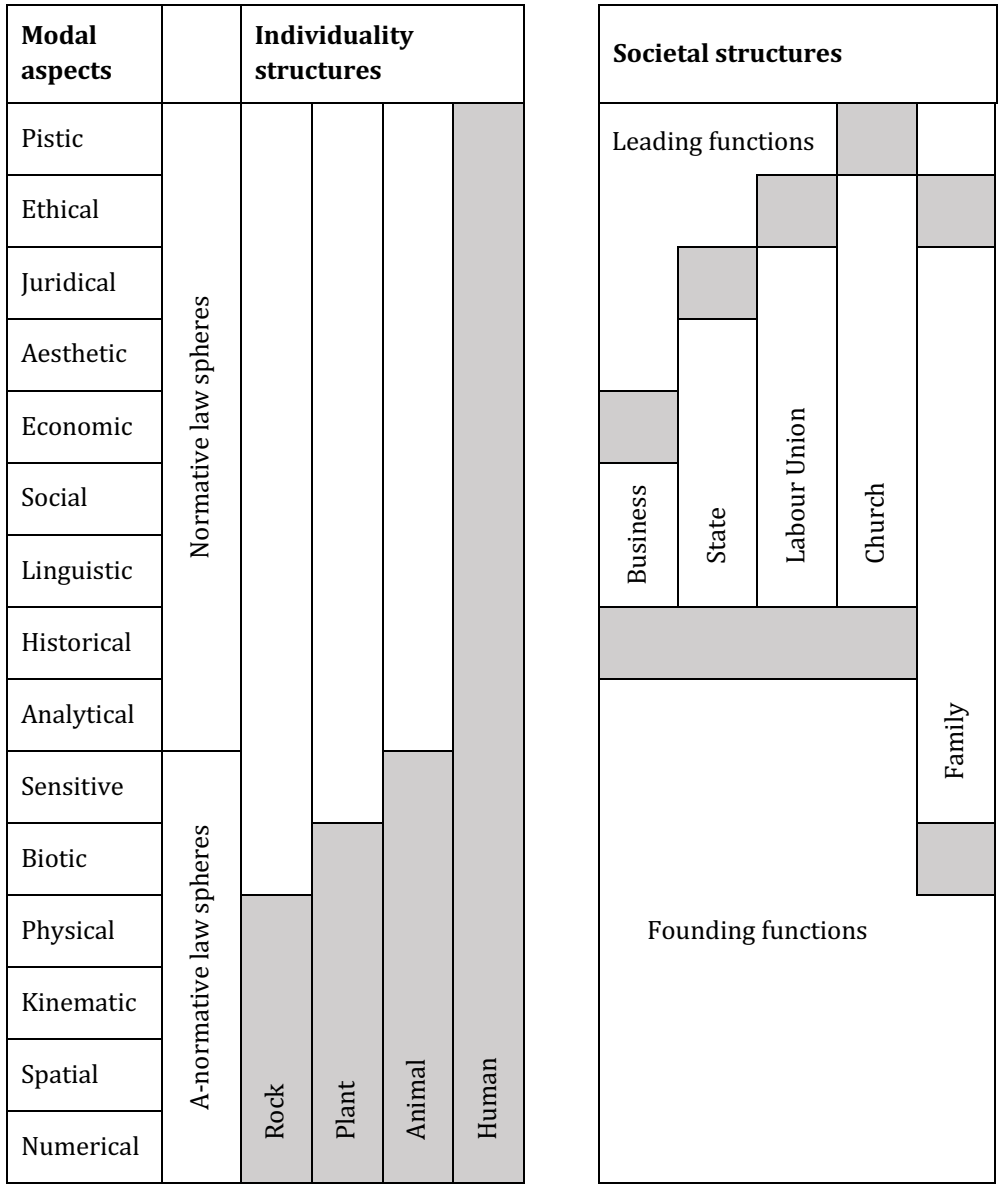

FIGURE 1. A diagrammatic representation of Dooyeweerd's modal aspects and some qualifying functions of social institutions. (Adapted from E.L. Hebden Taylor, Reformation or Revolution, Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1970), 626.

11. Subject and object functions

In Reformational philosophy, a distinction is made between subject and object functions. Every "thing" (entity, event or process) has a qualifying aspect. In (animal or human) artefacts or social institutions, this qualifying function is constituted by a foundational and a leading function. In modes later than its qualifying or leading function (sometimes called its superstratum) the entity or institution has object functions (indicated in Figure 1). For all aspects earlier than its leading function (sometimes called the substratum) it has a subject function.

For a tree, for example, the qualifying aspect is biotic. Hence, in aspects earlier than the biotic (i.e. numerical, spatial, kinematic and physical) the tree has a subject function. It functions "actively": it has a size which can be measured, it takes up an amount of space, it sways in the breeze, it has certain physical properties and it is a living thing. In the later modes, it has an object function, it functions "passively": its size, type and colour can be perceived, but the tree cannot perceive (sensitive), it cannot name but it can be named (lingual), it cannot think, but it can be thought about (analytical), it has a certain economic value but it cannot engage in economics (economic aspect), it can be possessed but it cannot possess or sue anyone (juridical) etc.

Hence, all things have either a subject or object functions in all modal aspects. Humans alone function actively as subjects in all modal aspects:

> *An axe is subject to the law of gravity; so is man. But humanity's humanness is more apparent in their being subject to moral, analytical or juridical norms. Think of the roles and responsibilities of man and an axe in a court session. The axe lies on the table as an exhibit in a murder case. The defendant has violated moral and juridical norms, but the axe has not. Still, the axe plays a role in these normative aspects; it is important in the hearing as legal evidence. Its role is that of an object function in the moral and juridical aspects; its subject function ends with the physical.*[62]

According to Clouser the value of this analysis has multiple sides.[63] First of all, it allows constructing a theory of reality that is non-reductionist. It also avoids philosophising along the lines of the substance-approach, which is problematic insofar as it attributes a degree of independence to the "being" of created entities. Furthermore, it avoids the traps of both objectivism (e.g. Aristotle) and subjectivism (e.g. Kant). Objectivists and subjectivists are inclined to place the source of the order that is experienced in creation either in objects or subjects. In so doing they bypass the role of modal laws. For these and other reasons, this approach opens the door to sound Christian philosophising, as an alternative to both Scholastic and Humanist trends.

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[62] Kalsbeek, *Contours*, 122.

[63] Clouser, *Myth*, 237-268.

12. Theory of entities

Dooyeweerd maintains that societal structures, for example, church, state, political parties, families and so forth, are humanly established but are governed by transcendent conditions, by structural principles. These societal structures function in all the modal aspects, but they are more than the sum of their modal aspects. They are rooted in the order of cosmic time and so are subject to the law side of reality. They are not merely human creations but are governed and constrained by lawful, normative principles that are rooted in the creation order. They are shaped by structural principles. These structural principles have qualifying functions (leading and foundational).

The state, for example, functions in all the modal aspects (see Table 2). However, these aspects do not provide the unique structural identity of the state. This is provided by its leading function (i.e. the juridical function).

TABLE 2. The modal aspects of the state.[64]

Modal aspect	**Applied to the state**
Numerical	There are a certain number of citizens in the state
Spatial	The territory of the state takes up a certain geographical area
Kinematic	There is (usually) freedom of movement in the state
Physical	The state has the power of the sword - the use of force is permitted
Biotic	The state comprises people
Sensitive	There is a sense of belonging to a state
Analytical	It constructs a realm of public discourse
Historical	There is a national identity
Linguistic	There is (usually) a common language within a state
Social	It respects diplomatic protocols
Economic	The state has a budget that it needs to balance
Aesthetic	It should work for harmony within its social groups
Juridical	It has the responsibility of maintaining public justice
Ethical	There must be trust between the different departments of the state
Pistic/ certitudinal	The state's authority arises out of some confessional view

Dooyeweerd distinguishes several different social relationships; these are shown in Figure 2 below. Natural institutions are distinguished by having the biotic aspect as their founding function; most of the others have a historical (cultural) foundation (see Table 2

[64] Based on information from Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011) and D.F.M. Strauss, "Majority And The Limits Of Democracy", *International Journal of Sciences and Research* 72(12)(2016), 272-287.

above). For the family the leading function is the ethical aspect; for the state it is the juridical; for the institutional church the founding function is the historical aspect and the leading function, the pistical aspect. It is the leading function that characterises each institution and guides the role of all the other modal functions.

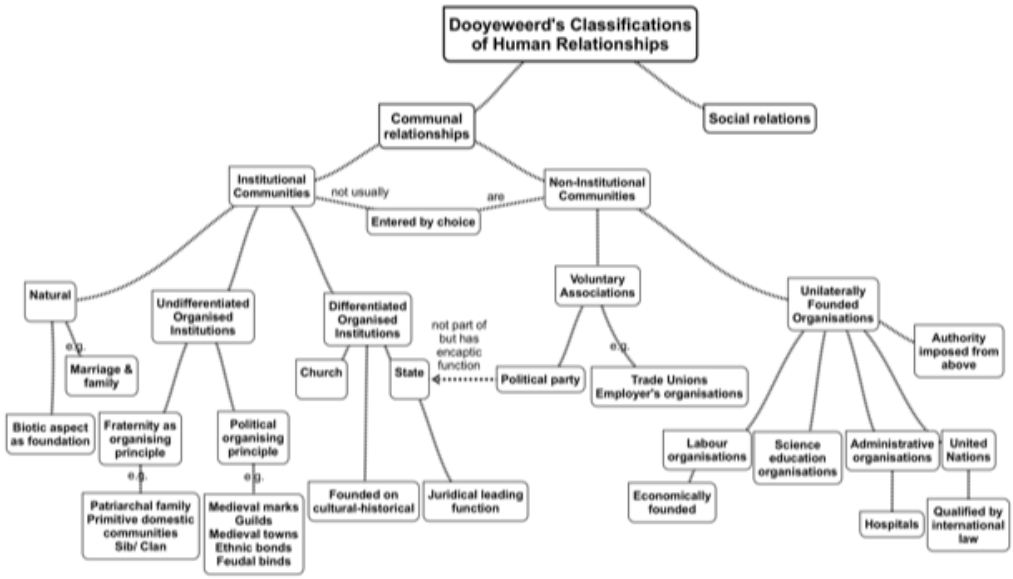

FIGURE 2. Dooyeweerd's classification of human relationships. (Based on information from Dooyeweerd, A Christian Theory of Social Institutions)

13. Ground-motives

Dooyeweerd identified four religious ground-motives that have shaped the development of Western culture. These are:

- form-matter;
- grace-nature;
- freedom-nature; and
- creation-fall-redemption.

The first three are "internally dualistic and fragmentary",[65] and the latter is, he maintains, biblical.[66]

Ground-motives were a relatively late development in Dooyeweerd's work.[67] They were first mentioned in *De Wijsbegerte der Wetsidee* (1935-1937), they were developed in much greater detail in *Vernieuwing en Bezinning* (1959) which was translated into English as *Roots of Western Culture*.

In *Roots* Dooyeweerd comments as follows:

> *The development of western culture has been controlled by several religious ground motives. These motives acquired their central influence upon the historical development of mankind via certain cultural powers, which over the centuries, successively gained leadership in the historical process. The most important of these powers have been the spirit of ancient civilisation (Greece and Rome), Christendom, and modern humanism.*[68]

He also elucidates some of the elements of a ground-motive. It:

- is a spiritual force
- acts as the absolute cultural mainspring of society
- governs all of life's expressions from the religious centre of life and directs them to a true or supposed origin of existence
- places an indelible stamp on the whole of culture and society
- determines one's whole worldview
- is driven by a spirit that is either the Spirit of God or that of an idol
- is a communal motive (not simply personal)
- can never be the object of study of a special science [or of philosophy]
- provides the point of departure for scientific theorising – hence science and scholarship can never be neutral with respect to religion.[69]

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[65] Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 11.

[66] A useful historical overview of these ground-motives is found in Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture* and in Dooyeweerd, *Reformation and Scholasticism in Philosophy Vol II. Series A, Volume 6*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press, 2013), 1-39.

Some (see, for example, Jeremy Ive, "A Critically Comparative Kuyperian Analysis and a Trinitarian 'Perichoretic' Reconstruction of the Reformational Philosophies of Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyweerd". *PhD Thesis* (London: King's College London, 2012) have suggested these ground-motives were a development of what Kuyper called life-systems (Paganism, Romanism, Modernism and Calvinism) identified in Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,1931), 9-40) – although Kuyper also included Islam. Klapwijk states rather bluntly: "Dooyeweerd's religious ground-motives of the West are replicas of the life-systems in Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism.*" (Jaap Klapwijk, Abraham Kuyper on Science, Theology and University" In S. Bishop, S. and J.H. Kok, (eds.) *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work & Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2013), 242.

[67] John Kraay, "Successive Conceptions in the Development of the Christian Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd". *Philosophia Reformata*, 44(2) (1979), 137-149; 45(1)(1980), 1-46.

[68] Dooyeweerd*, Roots of Western Culture*, 9.

[69] Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*.

The form-matter motive is the fundamental motive of Greek thought and culture. It originates, according to Dooyeweerd, from a meeting of two conflicting views the pre-Homeric natural religion – corresponding to the pole of matter – and the Olympian gods' cultural religion – corresponding to the pole of form.[70]

Creation, fall and redemption is the biblical ground-motive. This is the genuine starting point for a Christian philosophy and scholarship.

The nature—grace motive is typical of Roman Catholicism. It was an attempt to reconcile the opposed religious motives of Greek and Christian thought.[71]

The fourth ground-motive developed out of the Renaissance desire for a rebirth of humankind through a participating in the heroic ideal of human initiative found in Greco-Roman culture. It takes two forms: one gives priority to the freedom-motive, with its emphasis on liberty and autonomy; the other gives priority to the nature-motive with its emphasis on the domination of nature through science and mathematics. It entails a dualism of freedom and nature.

The two poles of nature and freedom resulted in two cultural ideals: the science ideal and the (freedom of the autonomous) personality ideal. The science ideal emphasises nature and the personality ideal emphasises freedom. The science ideal resulted in rationalism and modernism and in a mathematisation of nature; mathematics became the origin of all laws and temporal life. The personality ideal did not become popular until the eighteenth century. It resulted in Romanticism and more recently post-modernism.

The term *ground-motive* is a translation of the Dutch *grondmotief*. In the 1940s Dooyeweerd had been using the term *grondthema* (see, for example, his 1941 article in *Philosophia Reformata*). It was in a series of lectures at the Technical University of Delft in 1946-1947 that he used the term *grondmotief*.[72] Wolters suggests that the term *motive* in Dooyeweerd is used to suggest a dual meaning of "a recurrent pattern in philosophical thought" and "a deeper and more encompassing religious power which motivates human life in general".[73]

Not all Reformational scholars are completely convinced by the notion of religious ground-motives. Vollenhoven, according to Klapwijk "found it unfeasible to summarize the richness of the biblical message in 'such a formula' (he meant Dooyeweerd's Christian religious ground-motive)".[74] Vollenhoven developed his own ways of analysing the history of philosophy.[75]

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[70] Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 38-41.

[71] Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 44-45.

[72] Al Wolters, "Ground-motive", *Anakainosis*, 6(1) (1983), 1

[73] Al Wolters, "Ground-motive".

[74] J. Klapwijk, "Reformational Philosophy on the Boundary between the Past and the Future", *Philosophia Reformata,* 52(2) (1987),107.

[75] The differences between Dooyeweerd's ground-motives and Vollenhoven's approach have been shown to be compatible (see, for example, K.A. Bril, "Comparison between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven on the historiography of philosophy", *Philosophia Reformata,* 60 (1995):121-146, for a discussion of the difference and similarities between Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven).

Chaplin identifies some critical questions regarding the ground-motives.[76] These include the charge of acting like an interpretative grid, which can be misleading; if they are rooted in religious presuppositions it poses the issue as to if genuine philosophical communication can take place; and they can give the impression that they are the product of theoretical debate.

Bos has expressed doubts over the Dooyeweerd's description of the origin of the form-matter ground-motive but nevertheless maintains it "contains a valid perspective on the inherent dialectic of Greek thought".[77]

IV. *Objections to Reformational Philosophy*

Despite the fruitfulness, the comprehensiveness, and the consistency of this approach it is not without its detractors.[78] Several criticisms have been made. These include:

- Lack of wide acceptance
- Issues in attitude; these include
    - confrontational approach
    - dogmatic arrogance
    - triumphalism
- Modal aspects are a straitjacket imposed on reality (Diller)
- Promotes subjectivism and idealism
- Minimising of Scripture

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[76] Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd*, 44-45.

[77] Bos, cited in Strauss, *Philosophy: Discipline of Disciplines*, 616.

[78] Critiques/ criticisms have come from (among others):

Oliver Barclay, "Appendix: The Dooyeweerdian 'Christian Philosophy'" in Oliver Barclay, *Developing a Christian Mind*. (Leicester: IVP, 1984).

Vincent Brummer. *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy*. (Franeker: T. Wever, 1961.

Gayle Doornbos, "Modern Reformed Philosophies" in ed. Joseph Minch, *Philosophy and the Christian: The Quest for Wisdom in the Light of Christ* (The Davenant Press, 2018).

J. Douma *Another Look at Dooyeweerd: Some Critical Notes Regarding the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*. (Winipeg: Premier Publishing, 1981).

John V. Fesko, *Reforming Apologetics: Retrieving the Classic Reformed Approach to Defending the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).

John M. Frame and Leonard J. Coppes *The Amsterdam Philosophy: A Preliminary Critique* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Harmony Press, 1972).

Lydia Jaeger "Herman Dooyeweerd, la Spéculation sur le Logos et la Verité", in A. Nisus (ed.), *L'amour de la Sagesse: Hommage à Henri Blocher* (Edifac/ Excelsis, Vaux-sur-Seine/Charols, 2012), 299-310.

Ronald H. Nash. *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1962).

Hugo A. Meynell, "The Philosophy of Dooyeweerd: A Transcendental Thomist Appraisal," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 265-87.

Robert A. Morey. *The Dooyeweerdian Concept of the Word of God* (Phillipsburgh, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974). A polemic criticising Dooyeweerdian uses of the Word of God.

David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), ch. 9.

Basden discusses several objections in chapter 12 of his *Foundations of Practice and Research*, likewise, so does Choi, *Dialogue and Antithesis.*

- A low view of the church (Douma)
- There is no such thing as Christian philosophy (Diller, Barclay, VanDrunen, and many others)
- It is rooted in Kantianism/ idealism/ phenomenology (Fesko, Doornbos, Jaeger[79])
- It is fideistic (Meynell, Doornbos)
- Lack of piety
- Unscriptural approach to the Word of God (Morey)
- Supratemporal heart (many)
- Its view of the relationship between philosophy and theology (Douma, Barclay)
- It downplays the role of theology (Barclay[80])
- The arbitrariness of the fifteen modal aspects (Poythress)

In the following I cannot address all these issues – some comments will have to suffice. Several of the criticisms come from those who are seeking to resuscitate a form of Reformed Scholasticism and a two kingdoms approach.[81] Dooyeweerd was opposed to both and so it is not surprising that they disagree with him – I will leave a critique of their criticisms to another time.

One criticism is its lack of wide acceptance. This is hardly a valid objection: democracy is hardly an arbiter of truth. Reasons for its lack of popularity have at least in the UK included the inroads of logical positivism, the influence of a Scholasticism, and perhaps an (unconscious) antipathy towards the Dutch dating from the Anglo-Dutch wars in the seventeenth century. In the past, the prevalence and impact of logical positivism have denied the place and role of religion and metaphysics in theorising.

That Dooyeweerd was indebted to both Kant and Husserl's phenomenology is well documented. This does not, however, mean that he was reliant on them or that his approach is coloured by their views. Both Kant and Husserl accepted the autonomy or neutrality of theoretical thought – this is fully critiqued and shown to be faulty by Dooyeweerd and illustrates a marked contrast between his view and theirs.

Jochen Douma (b. 1931)[82] in his *Another look at Dooyeweerd*[83] originally presented to the Association of Calvinistic Philosophy in September 1976, provides what he describes as an inventory of "valuable criticism" of the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea primarily from members of the Liberated church.[84] His criticism falls into the following categories: the role

[79] For a critique of Jaeger, see, for example, Renato Coletto "Lydia Jaeger and Herman Dooyeweerd: Dialogues on the Foundations of Christian Scholarship", *Koers — Bulletin for Christian Scholarship,* 80 (2) (2015), 1-10.

[80] I have dealt with many of Barclay's objections, particularly regarding the role of philosophy and theology in Stephen Bishop, "The (lack of) reception of Reformational ideas by English Calvinists: a philosophical enquiry" *PhD Thesis* (Potchefstroom: North-West University, 2018).

[81] Notably, VanDrunnen *op. cit.* and Fesko *op. cit*. For a critique of Fesko's critique see Rudi Hayward, "Dooyeweed among the reformed Thomists", *Intermezzo* (22 November 2019) https://reformationalintermezzo.blogspot.com/2019/11/dooyeweed-among-reformed-thomists.html

[82] Douma was professor of Christian ethics at the Theological University in Kampen from 1970 to 1997.

[83] Jochen Douma, *Another Look*.

[84] The Liberated Church was a secession from the Reformed Church in the Netherlands led by Klaas Schilder. They took objection to many Kuyperian emphases within the Reformed Church in the Netherlands of the time. It is

of the confession, the church, the pistical function, creational revelation, the role of the heart as a concentration point and as being supra-temporal, ground motive, sphere sovereignty and the relationship of philosophy and theology. Most of these objections are framed by the issues the Liberated church had with the Kuyperian influences on the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

The role of the heart and its supra-temporality has been a contentious issue among Reformational advocates. Some such as Pete Steen object to it,[85] whereas others such as Glenn Friesen see it as being central to Dooyeweerd's position.[86] Such debate is healthy, but it should not be used as an excuse to ignore the whole of Dooyeweerd's work. That some Reformational scholars disagree over this may suggest that it is not an integral part of Dooyeweerd's approach.

Several criticisms are to do with presentation and its difficulty. There is no doubt Dooyeweerd is difficult to understand. Yet, in 1928 Dooyeweerd is alleged to have said: "If I am incomprehensible to a simple shoemaker, then my philosophical work is useless".[87] Unfortunately, this goal has not yet been achieved. One challenge that faces Reformational scholars is to translate the difficult concepts and ideas into a way that can be understood more clearly by "simple shoemakers". The use of unusual terms (for example, retrocipations and enkapsis) and how common terms (for example, analogies, subject and object) are given specific meanings adds to the difficulty. Though in defence most schools of philosophy have their own jargon.[88]

The modal aspects have been accused, of being a straitjacket imposed on reality (Diller). Whereas Dooyeweerd would see them as being reality-imposed; the modal spheres have arisen out of reality. The fact that there are fifteen of them is not written on tablets of stone; indeed, some Dooyeweerdians argue over the number and position of them. Dooyeweerd initially identified fourteen aspects but then separated the kinematic aspect from the physical aspect.[89]

Dooyeweerd is clear:

> *This philosophy is not a closed system. It does not claim to have a monopoly on truth in the sphere of philosophical reflection, nor that the provisional conclusions of its inquiries have*

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inevitable, then that they would not agree with many of the facets of Reformational thought. Schilder was a member of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy for a brief period in 1939.

[85] Peter Steen, *The Structure of Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1983). Others who are skeptical of supratemporality include Vollenhoven, Hendrik Van Riessen and Jan D. Dengerink.

[86] Glenn Friesen, *Neo-Calvinism and Christian Theosophy*.

[87] Cited in Douma, *Another Look*, 19.

[88] Not to mention technical theological terms such as infra- and supralapsarianism, antinomianism, neonomianism, hypostatic union, homoousios, and homoiousios … the list could go on.

[89] M.D. Stafleu takes issue with the social aspect and would want to add a political aspect. Seerveld and Roper have taken issue with the positioning of the aesthetic aspect, and Roper and Ouweneel have separated the psychic aspect into perceptive and sensitive modes, giving 16 modes See, for example, Calvin Seerveld, *Rainbows for a Fallen World*; Duncan L. Roper, "The Reformational Contribution to Aesthetic Theory: *Issues* 7 (November 1992). https://www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/Roper/ReformationalContributionAestheticTheoryDLR.pdf; Ouweneel, *Wisdom for Thinkers.*

been made sacrosanct because of the central biblical motive which motivates and controls it. As a philosophy it does not in any way demand a privileged position for itself; on the contrary, it seeks to create a real basis for philosophical dialogue among the different movements – movements which often isolate themselves and which can only lead to stagnation and overestimation of one's own ideas.[90]

Diller's other objections arise primarily over the question of the relationship between philosophy and Christianity.[91] Diller denies that there is a distinctively Christian approach: "I tend to side with those people [including Heidegger and Barth] who deny the possibility of Christian philosophy".[92] The Reformational view affirms the existence of Christian philosophy. And for many commentators, there is the rub. A denial of the existence of distinctively Christian philosophy implies antagonism to the Reformational philosophy as it claims to be a Christian philosophy.

Two important questions must then be addressed and answered affirmatively if the Reformational perspective is not to flounder: these were questions raised at the beginning regarding the existence of a Christian philosophy. I will offer some brief tentative answers to the questions is a distinctively Christian philosophy possible? And is the Reformational perspective distinctively Christian?

1. Is a distinctively Christian philosophy possible?

Most contemporary philosophers of science agree that neutrality and objectivity is a fallacy. Our perception of reality is coloured by our worldview. Facts are theory dependent, and theories are worldview dependent.

If Christianity is a worldview, then as with any worldview, it determines the shape and framework of theories and consequently facts. It must then mean that a distinctively Christian approach to, the sciences and to philosophy is feasible. If there is a *Marxist* philosophy, a *feminist* philosophy, a *naturalist* philosophy, the list could go on, then why not a *Christian* philosophy?

2. Is the Reformational perspective distinctively Christian?

Could not a non-Christian accept the main contours of the Reformational approach? If so, does it undermine its claim to be distinctively Christian? I believe the answer to be yes and no, respectively. Non-Christian philosophies tend to make some or other aspect of creation (usually one of the modal spheres) self-existent; they are therefore at heart reductionist. Modal theory rejects reductionism. It asserts that no one aspect of creation is the only genuine

[90] Dooyeweerd. "Christian Philosophy: An Exploration", 4.

[91] For a rebuttal of Diller's approach see Richard A. Russell, "In Defence of Dooyeweerd", *Spectrum* 23 (2) (1991),147-159.

[92] Diller, "Herman Dooyeweerd", 140.

aspect or makes the existence of other aspects possible. All creation, each modal aspect, equally depends on God. None is reducible to another.[93]

To accept a Reformational perspective, one needs to accept the biblical distinction between the creator and creation. Everything other than God is creation. Nothing in creation is therefore self-existent; to declare it to be so, implies that something is uncreated, which gives it the status of divinity. The Reformational approach, therefore, comports well with Christian presuppositions.

A Reformational approach is at least *prima facie* a Christian approach. It should be stressed however that it is *a* Christian approach and not *the* Christian approach. Other perspectives may also be Christian.[94] To accept a plurality of Christian approaches does not deny the validity of any one of them.

V. *Final comments*

Dooyeweerd was ahead of his time in many ways; philosophers are slow in catching up. This is what Henk Hart has to say:

> *Philosophically these religious and social impulses come into focus in Dooyeweerd's lifelong struggle with the philosophical dogma, as he referred to it, of the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought. What is called foundationalism today, which Dooyeweerd referred to as the autonomy of reason, was really he argued, an uncritically adopted prejudice. Long before that tradition of centuries became widely untenable for philosophers in general – as it had for the last two decades – Dooyeweerd developed the Gegensatnd theory in order to expose the fallacies of this unexamined dogma. Michael Polanyi's theory of the scientist's indwelling in his framework of commitment, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the role of human interest in science, Gerald Radnitzky's theory of steering fields internal to science, and Thomas Kuhn's theory of the role of paradigms in the natural sciences are all prefigured in the way Dooyeweerd worked out his theory. He not only saw the problems connected with belief in rational autonomy very early, but he also was one of the first to formulate a comprehensive theory to deal with these problems.*[95]

And as Alvin Plantinga has observed:

> *Christian philosophy at the end of the 20th century is doing rather well along some dimensions, less well along others. And of course its work of properly relating to the Civitas Mundi is never done: as the latter constantly changes, so must the Christian response. But the Christian philosophical community must also offer its own accounts of the main philosophical topics and concerns. Herman Dooyeweerd made a determined and powerful*

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[93] See further Clouser, *Myth,* ch 10.

[94] For a discussion on the range of Christian philosophies see Steve Bishop "Christian Philosophy", *Journal for Christian Scholarship/ Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 55(3-14) (2109), 131-142.

[95] Hendrik Hart "Dooyeweerd's *Gegenstand* Theory of Theory," in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd: Reflections on Critical Philosophy in the Christian Tradition*, ed. C.T. McIntire, (Toronto: University of Press of America, 1985), 145.

> *effort to do precisely this: for that we are thankful. We must continue in the spirit of his work, offering our own accounts of these areas. This task is challenging, formidable, difficult, frustrating; it is also fascinating, beguiling, fulfilling. Most of all, it is the service we Christian philosophers owe to the Lord and our community.*[96]

These observations provide evidence enough that Dooyeweerd's Reformational philosophy deserves wider attention. Dooyeweerd's conclusion to his "Secularization of Science" provides a suitable warning and a hope:

> *For the children of the Calvinistic Reformation, there should be no question of wasting time in long scholastic discussions about whether science and philosophy also pertain to the kingdom of Jesus Christ or whether they belong instead to a domain of natural reason. This discussion need not go on, because, as we have shown, there is no natural reason that is independent of the religious driving force which controls the head of human existence.*[97]

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About the author

Steve Bishop is an independent researcher based in Wales, UK. He is a trustee of ThinkingFaith Network and maintains the website *www.allofliferdeemed.co.uk*. He is co-editor of On Kuyper (Sioux Center, IO: Dordt College Press, 2013.

[96] Alvin Plantinga, "Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century", in *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader,* ed. James Sennet, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 352.

[97] Herman Dooyeweerd, *Secularization of Science* (Memphis, TN: Christian Studies Center, 1979), 24.

APPENDIX 1. THE CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF DOOYEWEERD

> *The men of the philosophy of the law-idea reached very high. They undertook the awesome task not of coming to the Scriptures with a philosophy but of going to philosophy with the Scriptures. What they were working at was the construction of a truly Scriptural philosophy.*
>
> Cornelis Veenhof (1902-1983)[98]

In 2015 I carried out a survey of over 100 scholars and students familiar with Reformational philosophy[99] it was clear that Dooyeweerd's work was not forgotten but being developed in several diverse ways.

Educational institutions, organisations and publishing[100]

There are several higher education institutions founded on a Reformational basis. In North America, these include Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto,[101] Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa,[102] Trinity Christian College, Chicago, and Redeemer University College in Hamilton, Ontario – which houses the Dooyeweerd Centre. The Dooyeweerd centre has three main areas of research and work:

1) The Neo-Calvinist Bibliographic Database, with 2,157 fully searchable records.
2) ThinkNet Forum, a Google group forum dedicated to Dooyeweerd's ideas.

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[98] *Om de "Unica Catholica": Een beschouwing over de positie van de bezwaarden onder en over de synodocratie* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949),46. Translated by Theodore Plantinga, *Myodicy* 25 (January 2006). available here: https://web.archive.org/web/20160424110345/http://www.plantinga.ca/m/MDK.HTM

[99] Steve Bishop, "Perceptions of Reformational Philosophy - An Empirical Study". *Koers — Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 82(1) (2016). Available at: https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.82.1.2281

[100] See for further information the series of articles by Renato Coletto in *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*:

"Neo-Calvinist Organisations for Political Action", *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*, 49(4) (Summer, n. 410) (2009), 5-10.

"Reformational Organisations for Labour Relations", *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*. 50(2) (Winter, n. 412) (2010), 24-28.

"Reformational Institutions for Higher Education". *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*, 50 (Spring, n. 413) (2011), 9-14.

"Educational Associations in the Kuyperian Tradition. *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*, 50 (Summer, n. 414) (2011), 9-12.

"Reformational Outposts for Information and Communication". *Woord en Daad /Word and Action,* 51 (Autumn, n. 415) (2011), 29-33.

"Neo-Calvinist organisations for farming, business, tourism and so forth", *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*, 51 (Winter, n 416) (2011), 19-24.

Christian Organisations: A few Concluding Reflections", *Woord en daad /Word and action* (2012), 8-10.

[101] For a history of the ICS, see Robert E., VanderVennen, *A University for the People: A History of the Institute for Christian Studies* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2008).

[102] On Dordt University, see B.J. Haan, *A Zeal for Christian Education: The Memoirs of B.J. Haan* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 1992).

3) The Publication Program is committed to making available in English the works of Dooyeweerd, including the broader dissemination of the series, The Collected Works of Herman Dooyeweerd.[103]

The Collected Works translation project has 25 volumes of Dooyeweerd's work planned. The newly reformed Paideia Press is publishing these. ThinkNet is a lively and active mailing list that discusses many aspects of Reformational philosophy.[104]

In South Africa, several organisations and journals promote Reformational philosophy. The North-West University, in Potchefstroom, until recently, had a philosophical department which comprised many Reformational philosophers including Michael Heyns, Renato Coletto and Bennie van der Walt. Danie Strauss is a research fellow at the North-West University and was the first director of the Dooyeweerd Centre in Canada and is the general editor of Dooyeweerd's *Collected Works*.[105]

The VCHO (Christian Higher Education Association) was founded in Bloemfontein in 1949. They have made available many of Dooyeweerd's Collective Works in pdf on their website https://vcho.co.za/publikasies/. They also publish the journal *Tydskrif Vir Christelike Wetenskap | Journal for Christian Scholarship* (http://pubs.ufs.ac.za/index.php/tcw), which has a high proportion of papers from Reformational scholars.

Another South African journal, with a high number of Reformational-orientated papers, is *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship.* It is published by the Koers Society in South Africa (founded in 1926) and began publication in 1935 (https://www.koers.co.za/)

In the Netherlands, The Vereninging voor Calvinsche Wijsbegeerte (Association for Calvinistic Philosophy) was formed in 1935, to promote Reformational philosophy; Vollenhoven was the chair, Dooyeweerd, the vice-chair, K.J. Popma the secretary and J.H. Diemer the treasurer, other committee members included K. Dijk, S.G. de Graaf and A. Janse.[106] In his opening speech Vollenhoven stated:

> *What brings us here together is not so much philosophy, as the bond with the Word of God. However we also want to take that seriously in philosophy. This is necessary, since currently philosophy does not want to consider this, which also endangers the distinctions between the intrinsically different fields of life-bonds such as the church, the state, school and companies.*

Reformational chairs in "Calvinistic philosophy" in some of the Dutch Universities were established, the first of which was founded by Vollenhoven in 1947 to which S.U. Zuidema was appointed. Others appointed to these chairs were K.J. Poma, J.P.A. Mekkes and H. van Riessen. At the moment there are chairs at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Leiden, Twente,

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[103] https://www.redeemer.ca/academics/research/centre-for-christian-scholarship/dooyeweerd/ Date of access 23 December 2020).

[104] To subscribe to this group, send email to thinknet+subscribe@redeemer.ca and send a blank reply to the email you receive in return.

[105] See my interview with Strauss: http://stevebishop.blogspot.com/2018/03/interview-with-danie-strauss.html. Danie is no academic slouch he has published over 450 academic articles all drawing upon Dooyeweerdian insights – most are available on his website: http://www.daniestrauss.com/.

[106] In 2010 the name was changed from Stichting voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte (Foundation for Reformational Philosophy) to the Stichting voor Christelijke Filosofie (Foundation for Christian Philosophy).

Wageningen, Technical University of Delft, Technical University of Eindhoven, Technical University of Twente.

The first international Philosophical Conference was held in Driebergen to celebrate forty years of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy – numerous conferences have since been organised. The Association also founded an academic journal: *Philosophia Reformata.* Dooyeweerd was the first chief editor.

In the UK, the Thinking Faith Network– formerly WYSOCS, based in Leeds, was originally modelled on the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity but took a more Reformational approach. Previously several institutions/organisations have existed in the UK to promote a Reformational perspective these included College House (John Peck) in Cambridge and the Christian Studies Unit (Richard Russell) in Bath.[107]

Australia and New Zealand have been home to several Reformational scholars, including the late Ted Fackerell (1939-2019) and Duncan Roper (1940-2016), currently active are Bruce Wearne, Keith Sewell, Alan Cameron and Chris Gousmett.

There are some Labour Organisations with a Reformational foundation; these include CLAC, Canada and The Federation of the Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond).

Interest in Dooyeweerd is undergoing a resurgence in the Philippines (Romel Bagares), Indonesia (Lay Hendra Wijaya), South Korea (John Choi[108]), Mexico (primarily through the work of John Paul Roberts Heine and Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra[109]) and China.[110]

In Brazil Guilherme de Carvalho, works with the Associação Kuyper para Estudios Transdisciplinares (AKET – Kuyper Association for Trans-disciplinary Studies) which promotes a Reformational perspective.[111] Lucas G. Freire[112] is among several Reformational scholars who are based at McKenzie Presbyterian University.

Websites

Dooyeweerd pages www.dooy.info – set up by Andrew Basden in 1997. The website aims to aid scholars in understanding Dooyeweerd's philosophical framework. There are over 300 pages on the site which provides resources to explore, discuss and critique Dooyeweerd. In

[107] For a history of the Reformational movement in the UK see Steve Bishop "A History of the Reformational Movement in Britain. The Pe-World War II Years" *Koers*, 80(4) (2015), 5-16. Available at: http:// dx.doi.org/10.19108/ koers.80. 4 2216.; and "A History of the Reformational Movement in Britain. II: The post-World War II Years to the end of the Twentieth Century" *Koers*, 81(1) (2016), 51-70. http://dx.doi.org/10.19108/koers.81.1.2251.

[108] John Choi Pages www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/choi.htm.

[109] See my interview with de la Sienra http://stevebishop.blogspot.com/2020/05/interview-with-adolfo-garcia-de-la.html.

[110] Thomas Harvey, "Sphere Sovereignty, Civil Society and the Pursuit of Holistic Transformation in Asia" *Transformation* 33(1) (2105), 50-64. DOI: 10.1177/0265378815595246.

[111] Gulherme V.R. De Carvalho "What has Belo Horizonte to do with Amsterdam? A report from the Brazilian Kuyper Association" *Woord en Daad /Word and Action*, 49 (2009), 39-42.

[112] See my interview with Freire: http://stevebishop.blogspot.com/2020/05/interview-with-lucas-g-freire.html.

2015 Basden analysed the use of the Dooyeweerd pages in one week he found that there were 9323 hits.[113]

All of life redeemed (www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk) – I set up this in 2005 to provide a virtual library of Reformational resources. It averages around 1250 page views per month and has pages devoted to over 80 different scholars who work, or have worked, out of Reformational philosophy.

[113] Details at http://www.dooy.info/site/report150919-26.html#why.interest. Accessed August 1, 2019.

APPENDIX 2. GROUND-MOTIVES AND WORLDVIEW QUESTIONS

These responses are oversimplified and not nuanced – the aim is not to provide detailed answers to each of the questions merely suggestive, illustrative and indicative of the different positions.

	Form/Matter ground-motive	**Nature/grace ground-motive**	**Freedom/ Nature ground motive**				**Creation, fall and redemption ground-motive**
			Personality Ideal		Science ideal		
	Gnosticism	*Thomism*	*Critical theory*	*Anthroposophy*	*Deep ecology*	*Positivism/ Empiricism*	*Reformational*
Key figures/ writings	Valentinus (100-160 AD)	Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) *Summa Theologica* (1485)	Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*	Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) *Theosophy* (1922)	Arne Naess (1912-2009) *Ecology, community and lifestyle* (1989)	Auguste Comte (1798-1857) A.J. Ayer *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936)	Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) *New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (1953)
Where are we now?	A world that is part spiritual and part physical – each struggling for dominance The world has been	In a world created out of God – in a uni - (not multi) verse, as God is one We are created out of the mind of God	In a world characterised by oppressive power structures	We are in a mysterious universe, with which we have essential connections	The greens would see the earth as a single self-regulating organism; the term Gaia is often used to describe this concept	In a self-existent universe There is no world beyond the ordinary world of science and	In a creation, created by a loving, holy God - a purposeful, lawful creation A good although

	created flawed					common sense In a world of resources that can be understood and controlled by science, technology and economics	fallen creation
What is God like?	There are two gods a false creator god (demiurge) and the true god (pleroma); they are fighting for supremacy	Theistic. Logical and rational – his existence can be proved using the 5 ways	There is no God. A human invention to maintain the power structures	Pantheistic in general	Pantheistic	There is no God(s)	Theism – a trinity
Who are we?	We are strangers living in a flawed world. We are part material (made by the demiurge) and part spiritual (a fragment of the true	We are souls trapped in a body	We are many selves – we are either members of a dominant or a marginalised group (be it race, gender, sexual orientation, …)	Threefold as body, soul and spirit Fourfold as four bodies: physical, ethereal, astral and ego We are the same stuff as	humans are not the centre of the universe—indeed, as we shall see below, anthropocentricity (the view that the universe exists for man) is	We are autonomous individuals	We are the image-bearers of God To subdue and rule the creation as stewards of God.

	divine essence: a "divine spark"). We are largely ignorant of this divine spark within us			the earth and the universe; there are essential connections between all three	named as one of the causes of the problems that the earth faces.		To develop and unfold God's good creation To play our part in God's developing story
What is wrong?	Metaphysical alienation: the world is flawed because it was created in a flawed manner; the fault is the creator's It is the product of a lesser god who was unable to create a world of permanence. We need to be freed from this world of pain, suffering and death, freed	We are in a fallen and wicked world.	The misuse of power and power structures The oppression of others Capitalism	One problem is that we gloss over the mystery; the advances in science have not been matched by a corresponding advance in spirituality	We have become estranged from nature Humans have become too central, dominating nature and disturbing the natural order: we are upsetting Gaia's balance This anthropocentricity results in too much growth, both in population and in economic terms, hence the earth's resources are	We are not rational or scientific enough in our dealings with each other and the world Metaphysics and irrational speculation – especially theology and philosophy	Self-autonomy – we have rejected God and God-given creational norms and laws

	from this material existence We are ignorant of the divine spark within us.				rapidly depleting		
What is the remedy ?	Deep within humans is a divine spark that connects us with the true god, who is hidden from creation Our only hope is to acquire the information we need to perfect ourselves and evolve out of our current physical state Jesus descended from the spiritual realm to make	To escape from the world to enjoy the delight of heaven Spiritual disciplines will help us to crucify the body and help us experience the eternal bliss	To either get rid of power or obtain power to liberate others Redemption comes from liberation Be awoken, woke The need for activism To get rid of capitalism	There needs to be a refining of the scientific method to overcome its materialism and an increasing self-knowledge The human spirit needs a full unfolding The purpose of education is thus the full unfolding of the human spirit.	A total change in the structure of society Growth needs to be drastically cut Sustainable development, i.e. one that can be sustained without using up the earth's resources, and the need to get back into harmony with nature by having reverence and respect for the earth and its ecosystem, are the means of salvation	Science and rational thought as seen through experiment and observation The verification principle as a means of irradiating metaphysics and establishing what is true	Redemption and restoration through Jesus Christ

	available the knowledge (gnosis) necessary for self-perfection						
Where are we going?	Our bodies and souls are part of this corrupt, flawed creation; redemption is only for the spirit Death releases us from the prison of the material body If there has not been a substantial work of gnosis by the soul then the divine spark will be hurled back and embodied into the physical world again	Ultimately to an entirely non-earthly, spiritual existence		Reincarnation	Towards disaster, if we don't do something about it	Nowhere This life is all there is and death is the end	To a renewed heaven and earth

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THE CORPORATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL, THE SPIRIT AND THE SACRAMENTS:

Some Reflections on Comments by Stephen Clark

Robert Letham

Stephen Clark has written a characteristically kind and generous review article in dialogue with my recent *Systematic Theology.* He recommends settling down with it in a comfortable armchair on an evening, although in his case I imagine it would more likely be a sun lounger after emerging from a February swim in the Mediterranean. In the course of the review, Stephen raises some points of disagreement, inevitable in dealing with a book of this size. I would like to add some explanatory comments that might shed some light on our different approaches.

Most of the issues Stephen raises relate in some way to the respective priorities to be accorded to the individual and the corporate. I had set out, as I state in the introduction, to write from a confessional perspective, as one committed ecclesiastically to the theology of the Westminster Standards. This, in line with the Westminster divines themselves, was to be in a catholic context, drawing on the best thought of the historic church and the Christian tradition, from patristic, medieval, Reformation, post-Reformation and recent sources, from both the Western and Eastern church.

Along these lines, in the introduction, I give my approval to the methodological grid set forth by Oliver Crisp.[1] In this, Scripture is the supreme authority over all human opinions. Under Scripture, the ecumenical councils of the undivided church are accorded a primary place as representing the overall consensus of the whole people of God down the ages. A third and subordinate layer features confessions and creeds setting forth the theological convictions of ecclesiastical bodies in the fragmented church. Finally, and at the lowest level, are the writings of individual theologians, which are subject to the approval, successively, of the higher levels; these are essentially theological opinions, *theologoumena* as the Greek church calls them. This grid provides meaning to all that follows and is set out in detail in the introduction. It explains, *inter alia,* why I pay relatively little attention to contemporary New Testament commentators. Besides the point that I am not a professional New Testament scholar, it will take time before proposals on individual exegetical points ever become part of the body of received doctrine. New Testament commentators focus mainly on the background and exegesis of a biblical book whereas systematic theology considers the whole of Scripture, both in its statements and entailments and in the complex inter-relationship of those entailments, on both theoretical and metatheoretical levels.[2] Moreover, since divergent opinions of various individuals can be found in every ecclesiastical setting and on every theological

[1] Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 17.

[2] See the chapter "Theological Questions to Biblical Scholars," in Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 52-83.

point, as they are evident in every human activity, due to imposed word limits it precludes a preoccupation with such matters. I discuss this point more fully in the introduction.

In this light, my original idea for the title of the book was *Church Dogmatics.* For a number of reasons, the publisher considered the eventual title to be preferable, and I agree that this verdict was correct. Apart from creating the false impression that I was aping Barth, it was thought that such a title would not resonate with the general Christian public. This in itself tells a story, as it indicates an unfamiliarity by that public with doing theology, let alone other matters, in the context of the church and its historic formularies.

That is why I have given relatively cursory attention to the detailed proposals of various exponents of the self-styled 'new covenant theology.' Whatever the status of its supporters, and among these are highly respected names, I have demonstrated that, by its abandonment of the Decalogue as the rule of the Christian life, it is outside the great tradition of the church – Reformed, Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, patristic, including the historical tradition of Christian *catechesis*, in which the Apostles' creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments are the backbone.[3] That contemporary evangelicalism considers the 'new covenant theology' an evangelical option displays the state of contemporary evangelicalism. Since, for obvious reasons, this movement has made inroads largely in credobaptist churches, I hope to deal with the matter in detail at a later time.

This raises further questions. Stephen remarks that such scholars stand "firmly within the evangelical tradition, with a high view of Scripture and with careful exegesis and impressive historical scholarship." Without respect to the scholars Stephen names, I contest the claim that these features are *by themselves* sufficient to place a person within the evangelical tradition, whatever that tradition may be. As but one example, the Socinians had a high view of the Bible. John Biddle, after expounding his rock-solid doctrine of Scripture went on to oppose virtually every doctrine in the Christian faith since he rejected the Christian tradition, the ecumenical councils and their use of extra-biblical terms.

On the question of spiritual gifts. I am close to completion of a book on the Holy Spirit, which should, all being well, see the light of day in 2023. It will be well to note, as Thiselton comments regarding prophecy and tongues, that there is no consensus among New Testament scholars as to what these gifts actually were in the first century. The Pentecostal, Gordon Fee remarks that we have no way of knowing what many of them were and there is little point in asking.[4] To have included such discussion in a book of the present nature would have made it unwieldy and exceeded agreed word limits. In passing, it is interesting that Stephen includes favourable references to the Lewis Revival of 1950, of which Donald MacLeod wrote that it introduced "a whole new language as unknown to the Bible as it is to the Highland pulpit."[5]

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[3] See a small collection of representative examples, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

[4] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 901, 979; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 601; see also Richard M. Blaylock, "Towards a Definition of New Testament Prophecy," *Themelios* 44 /1 (2019): 41–60.

[5] Iain D Campell and Malcolm Maclean, eds. *The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald* MacLeod (Fearn: Mentor, 2011), 58.

This brings us right back to the relationship between the individual and the corporate, the particular theologian or exegete and the church. These questions come to the fore in Stephen's treatment of the right to private judgment. No one in their right mind would deny for one nanosecond that the gospel places on each one of us, as individuals, the call to believe and obey, nor that God, in Scripture, does anything other than hold us personally to account. However, I have argued that this is framed by the fact that we are part of the church, as people in Israel were seen in relation to their forebears and their tribe. The entire race is either in Adam or in Christ. I have written elsewhere that the individual flourishes in the community; cricketer Ben Stokes can only display his skills in the context of being part of a team. Stephen cites Cranmer as calling each individual person to the reading of Scripture – but Cranmer was instrumental in the drawing up of confessions, as indeed were all the other figures Stephen mentions. They were churchmen. Certainly, Athanasius was writing letters and treatises of his own composition but let us not forget he was doing so as bishop of Alexandria and was fighting precisely for a right churchly confession of the status of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the trinity. Moreover, the Reformers were not individualists, and did not decide to up sticks and leave the Roman church of their own initiative; they were forced out in various ways, often under threat of death. It was Rome that was disruptive, they claimed, for the contemporary church had abandoned the teachings of Scripture, the fathers, and the best of the medievals.

Stephen proceeds to indicate problems in societies that have a strong communal nature. While that is true – which culture lacks problems in a fallen world? – this misses my point. I am not arguing in favour of adopting an Asian cultural model, but I point out that in order to grasp many of the structures in which the gospel is presented in the Bible we need to see that there is a collective orientation and that this can be more immediately understood in those societies that have a tribal or communal structure than in ours. Union with Christ, in Adam, in Christ - these are not peripheral or incidental for they are at the heart of the New Testament's teaching on salvation. This is not academic. It is pastoral. Yet, since beginning to be aware of sermons over sixty-five years ago, I cannot personally recall a single occasion, until recently, while I was in the pew, when these were ever explained.

I do not try to pit the individual against the community but rather to set the individual within the community, with the recognition that the community as such has precedence since the Father has determined to present the Son with a bride, the church, not with a colossal aggregate of disparate individuals, even though the church is colossal in size and scope and composed of individuals. Cricket provides the individual with an outstanding forum in which to flourish while in the pursuit of the interests of the team. I have always insisted that cricket is vital for theology.

Stephen thinks I have too great an emphasis on the sacraments. Yet, while he recognizes their importance it might be well to recall that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in his parting message to his apostles before his ascension, says "Go therefore, and disciple the nations, baptizing them..." For him, it was first in order. Indeed, the Reformation spilt more ink over the sacraments than on any other single issue.

Finally, Stephen has concerns with my comments on the Spirit conferring grace in connection with baptism. This is somewhat surprising since Stephen does not want to be considered an individualist in the sense we have discussed and is sympathetic to Reformed theology, in which covenant is at the heart. In fact, I was merely expounding the *Westminster Confession of Faith,* 28.

Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament ... a sign and seal of ... ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration... 28:1

The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of the ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time. 28:6 (italics mine).

I explain this in more detail in my book on the Westminster Assembly.[6] Belief in the efficacy of baptism, of the Spirit conveying grace through the sacraments, was not peculiar to that body; the *Leiden Synopsis,* an earlier and representative compendium of thought in the Reformed church, published in 1625 in the wake of the Synod of Dort, also expressed that the grace signified, sealed and exhibited in baptism is conferred by the Holy Spirit to the elect in God's own time, and ultimately received through faith.[7] Indeed, in his recent work on baptism, lauded as seminal, Lyle Bierma has established that this was the common commitment of Calvin and the classic Reformed confessions.[8] The reality is that many today if they got into the Tardis and showed up at the Westminster Assembly, the Synod of Dort or any of the classic Reformed synods would be shown the door. I trust their dismissal would be done most kindly and with regret,[9] although – given Westminster's view that antinomianism was the major presenting threat at the time – this would be unlikely in the case of the 'new covenant theologians.' Yet the Westminster Assembly represented the quintessence of Puritan theology; many today who claim allegiance to such theology do so to aspects of it that appeal to them, often refracted through the selective lens of various approved publishers.

I anticipate that Stephen might suggest that the example of Zwingli negates my argument, as he espoused a different view of the sacraments. However, his views were largely his own; no major Reformed confession adopted them. Indeed, it is not entirely clear that he held the position that has often been ascribed to him. Elsewhere, following the consensus on his views, I have written that "Zwingli's attachment to neo-Platonic forms of thought had bequeathed a legacy of ontological dualism by which material objects were no longer considered to be suitable for God to convey spiritual grace."[10]

Having spent most of my life since my mid-twenties in the USA, I sometimes see things from the angle of American church history. These matters are reminiscent of the differences between old

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[6] Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009), 322-347. See especially 333-39 for the section, 'the Reformed Doctrine of Baptism to 1643.'

[7] Johannes Polyander et. al., *Synopsis purioris theologiae, disputationibus quinquaginta duabus comprehensa* (Leiden: ex officina Elzeverianus, 1625), 644-54.

[8] Lyle D. Bierman, *Font of Pardon and New Life:John Calvin and the Efficacy of Baptism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[9] The divines held that the communion of saints extends to "all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus" (*WCF* 26:2*).*

[10] Review of Iain D Campell and Malcolm Maclean, eds. *The People's Theologian: Writings in Honour of Donald MacLeod* (Fearn: Mentor, 2011), in *Foundations* 61 (Autumn 2011), 74-77, here 75. See Zwingli. *Of Baptism* (1525), in G.W. Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger* (London:SCM, 1953), 130; W.P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 86-107, 180-193. See K.J. Drake, *The Flesh of the Word: The* Extra-Calvinistcum *From Zwingli to Early Orthodoxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), for a comprehensively supported case that Zwingli in his developing thought shared the bulk of the Christological and sacramental perspectives of later Reformed theology.

school and new school in American Presbyterianism. In our day it is good to discuss them, recognise them, treat them with perspective and not repeat the divisive mistakes made back then. I am thankful to Stephen, not only for his warm commendation of the book but for some stimulating points that encourage further discussion.

About the Author

Robert Letham is Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Union School of Theology in Bridgend, Wales.

THE CORPORATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL, THE SPIRIT AND THE SACRAMENTS:

Reply to Professor Robert Letham's Response to Review Article on his *Systematic Theology*

Stephen Clark

Professor Letham has done the great courtesy, both to readers of this journal and to me, of giving some explanatory comments for having written some of those things in his superb *Systematic Theology* with which I took issue in a review article that I wrote for this journal. He has also explained why he did *not* address certain matters in what many of us regard as his *magnum opus*. He generously acknowledges that my review article was in dialogue with his *Systematic Theology*. In so doing he has set a fine example of how theological discussion should be conducted. What I regard as the many, many positive features of one of the finest volumes of systematic theology which I have ever read far outweigh what I consider, by way of comparison, to be few and minor deficiencies. The Editor has also done me the courtesy of sending me Professor's Letham Response before the publication of the current issue of this journal. I shall, therefore, make a few brief comments upon Professor Letham's response. I do so in the same spirit in which he has written. It may help if I identify those areas in Professor Letham's response where we are, in fact, in agreement.

To begin with, I agree entirely with the adoption of Oliver Crisp's "methodological grid". Furthermore, I fully accept that it is right to draw on the best resources of the "holy catholic church" and that this attitude was expressed by the Westminster Divines. It is one of the many features of the book which I commended in my review article.

Secondly, I commended the fact that although *Systematic Theology* covers so much ground, it does so with an economy of words and is characterised by enviable conciseness. This being so, I fully understand that to keep the book within manageable limits Professor Letham could hardly have been expected to have interacted extensively with New Testament commentaries.

In the third place, I fully accept that holding to the inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy and authority of Scripture does not necessarily place one within the evangelical tradition. What the Socinians and John Biddle were in their day, people like Jehovah's Witnesses are in our day: professing *formally* a high view of the Bible while *materially* denying the doctrinal content of the same Holy Scripture, doctrinal content which was expressed and affirmed in the great Ecumenical Councils and Creeds of the first seven centuries AD.

Fourthly, I hope that a careful reading of my review would lead the reader to appreciate that not only do I believe in the importance of the corporate emphasis in Scripture, especially as this is expressed and worked out in the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology) but that this was one of the features which I commended in the book. The difference between Professor Letham and myself at this point touches on related but distinct aspects of this issue. I shall comment briefly on this a little later.

In the fifth place, Professor Letham's explanatory comments in response to my review have largely helped to clear up the misgivings I expressed with respect to some of what he wrote concerning baptism. The fault may have been mine in having misread what he had originally written.

The final area where there is not much, if any, blue water between us at all concerns the Lord's Supper. I went out of my way to stress that Robert Hall (an Independent with respect to church government and a credo-Baptist) wrote of the Lord's Supper in terms which could have come straight from Calvin himself. And just for the record, I am largely in agreement with the doctrine of Christ's *bodily* absence from and his *spiritual* presence in the Lord's Supper. Although done in remembrance of Christ, it is much, much more than a remembrance and is a means of grace.

Wherein, then, lie our differences? First, I fear that Professor Letham's genuine humility and modesty have overreached themselves when he says that he is not a professional New Testament scholar; although this may be so, his exegetical abilities are such that he would be able to gain easy access to that guild. I am not indulging in flattery for rhetorical effect. I freely acknowledge that the arguments he adduced in his excellent book *The Holy Trinity* (and which he reproduces in *Systematic Theology*) for translating *monogenēs* as "only-begotten" fully convinced me of the rightness of that rendering. Furthermore, they showed him to be a systematic theologian who was well aware of the best New Testament scholarship on both sides of that debate and who possessed the linguistic ability and exegetical 'instinct' which would be the envy of many New Testament scholars. This being so, I remain surprised that there really was no interaction with scholarly literature concerning the issue of cessationism. Let me explain.

Professor Letham quotes from Carson's *Commentary on John's Gospel* in support of belief in the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit; from C. John Collins's exegetical treatment of Genesis 1-4, and E.J. Young's *Studies in Genesis 1* when dealing with the interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis. Strictly speaking, the *doctrine* of creation is distinct from the numerous *accounts* of creation found in different parts of the Old Testament; but aware, as he is, of the differences, not to say divisions, within the evangelical world over the interpretation of the Genesis account of creation, Professor Letham referenced numerous works of Old Testament exegesis concerning this. Why, therefore, the reticence to do likewise with respect to the issue of the gift of prophecy found in 1 Corinthians 12-14? I accept that limits have to be set to the length of a book. But an Appendix of 33 pages on the main interpretations of Genesis 1 but no interaction with *scholarly* literature on cessationism, not even for a page or two?

It is hardly a response to say that Thiselton observes that New Testament scholars differ as to the nature of certain spiritual gifts and that the Pentecostal commentator Gordon Fee professes a measure of ignorance concerning the nature of some of these gifts. Why the Appendix on Genesis 1? Precisely because of the varied interpretations. Does not the same hold for differences concerning baptism and eschatology? As for the reference to Donald MacLeod's comments on the Lewis revival of 1950, I was hardly endorsing all that took place (nor were MacLeod's criticisms levelled against that which I mentioned) and referred to only one incident in that revival, alongside similar incidents amongst the Scottish Covenanters, in the ministry of Spurgeon, and references to teaching found in Calvin and John Owen.

The second area of difference relates to the fact that I remain unconvinced by Professor Letham's explanatory comment as to why he did not interact with so-called 'new covenant theology', and that for numerous reasons. In my review, I referenced the fact that in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*

Professor (as he now is) Richard Bauckham quoted extensively from major figures in the Patristic, Medieval, Reformation and post Reformation eras who, quite simply, did *not* accept the view of the Mosaic Law which, for example, the Westminster Confession of Faith espouses. Indeed, blessed with the good, almost eidetic, memory that he has, Professor Letham surely remembers the answer given by Professor Douglas Moo to a question put to him by a former Administrator of Affinity (though he was not in this position at the time) in the final 'Panel Session' at the 2009 Affinity Study Conference on 'The End of the Law?'. Asked if he would preach on and through the Ten Commandments, Moo replied that of course he would but that he would now preach them Christologically and through the lens of the New Testament. In his explanatory Response to my review, Professor Letham cites both the Heidelberg Catechism and some of the various Westminster Standards in support of his statement that the Decalogue is the rule of the Christian life. But even a cursory comparison of the answer to Question 103 of the Heidelberg Catechism with the answers to Questions 57 – 62 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism would demonstrate that *in practice* what Professor Moo said could easily sit within the former catechism though not within the latter.

With respect to the corporate nature of salvation, the differences between Professor Letham and me may have as much to do with the fact that he tells us that he spent much of his life from his mid-twenties in the USA, whereas until 2020 I spent the bulk of mine in Wales, with a number of years in England. I was at pains to stress in my review the emphasis placed by eighteenth-century evangelical leaders in England and Wales upon the church and the fact that they were not only churchmen with a strong doctrine of the Lord's Supper (after all, they were Anglicans) but, in the case of Daniel Rowland for example, were steeped in the Church Fathers, as well as Reformation and Puritan writings.

I did not disagree with Professor Letham over the fact that the church and the corporate nature of salvation are crucially important; rather, my concern was that in his laudable aim to redress the balance towards the corporate and communal from the individualism found in some quarters, he laid the blame for individualism on the eighteenth century and its revivals and was not giving sufficient attention to the danger of losing sight of the individual. I did not deny that Cranmer was a churchman (only a historical ignoramus could do that) and I stressed the churchmanship of William Whittaker. I referenced statements by these men to challenge Professor Letham's assertion that the Reformers did not believe in private interpretation. I stressed that they did not believe in *individualistic* interpretation but the quotations I gave from Cranmer and Whittaker abundantly demonstrated their belief in private interpretation. Nor am I alone. I first came across Whittaker's words in an article by Professor Paul Helm on the right of private judgement. Both emphases – being a church person and exercising one's duty and right of private judgment – are needed and I am sure that Professor Letham and I are agreed upon this, though I still differ from him in his negative assessment of the eighteenth-century revivals. I fully accept that one cannot have God as one's Father if one does not have the Church as one's mother. It is what those words mean which are the crucial issue. I submit that Galatians 4:26-27 are definitive for understanding aright what this means.

Which brings me to baptism. I find myself in agreement with what Professor Letham has said in his explanatory comments in response to my review. In my review, my concern was that he appeared to suggest that anyone who did not understand verses such as Romans 6:3-4 or Col. 2:12 as referring to water baptism was in effect perpetuating one of the errors of Gnosticism.

Furthermore, given that circumcision was an Old Testament sign and seal and that water baptism is a New Testament sign and seal, I was concerned that insufficient emphasis was placed by Professor Letham on the dangers of formalism. I was not, however, in any way wishing to downplay the importance of water baptism as a covenant sign and seal and as the means of entrance into the *visible* church. I fully accept that Professor Letham subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The section on baptism is deeply instructive. Chapter XXVII deals in general with the sacraments. Paragraph III of that chapter states, *inter alia*: "The grace ... exhibited in or by the sacraments *rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them*" (my italics). It goes on to state that the efficacy of a sacrament depends "upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with the precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit *to worthy receiver" (my italics)*. It is clear that one must be a worthy receiver for a sacrament to be efficacious.

Chapter XXVIII deals specifically with baptism. Paragraph I stresses that it is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace and of the recipient's ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God to walk in newness of life. This accords with what Chapter XXVII paragraph I says, which states that sacraments 'confirm our interest in' Christ'. Something is confirmed that is already present. A sign and a seal are not, in the strict sense of the word, to be *identified* with that signified and sealed by the outward sacrament. This is borne out in paragraph 5 of Chapter XXVIII. This states that although it is a great sin to neglect or contemn the ordinance of baptism, "yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated".

These words are important for a proper understanding of the words from paragraph VI of this chapter, which Professor Letham has quoted towards the end of his response to my review. Having stated that the efficacy of baptism is not tied to the moment in time when it is administered (and it is important for credo-Baptists [such as myself] to appreciate this point, which vitiates much of the unfounded criticism levelled by credo-Baptists at the paedo-Baptist position), it goes on to state that the "grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost *to such* (whether of age or infants) *as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time*" (my italics). The italicised words are all important: the grace is only conferred to such as that grace belongs to and this is according to the counsel of God's own will. This, of course, accords with the answer to Question 91 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation ... only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of the Spirit in them *that by faith receive them*" (my italics).

Pulling all of the above together, one may say the following. Grace and salvation are signified and sealed by sacraments and confirmed by them. Faith is necessary to be a possessor of the grace of salvation which is signified, sealed, exhibited and conferred by the sacrament. The efficacy of the sacrament is not tied to the time of its administration, which is why it is perfectly possible to believe that the child of a believer who later becomes a believer has had that grace of salvation conferred upon him/her by baptism precisely because the efficacy of the sacrament is not tied to the time of its administration and the promise of its benefit is to worthy receivers. Since, in line with Reformation teaching that the sacraments are meaningless apart from the Word of God, the Westminster Shorter Catechism states that the outward means of conveying the benefits of redemption are conveyed to us by Christ, especially by the Word, sacraments, and prayer and it is to the elect that these are made effectual for salvation (Answer to Question 88). These things being

so, although the sacraments are of great importance, they are not essential to salvation, whereas the hearing of the Word and prayer are; the signs and seals may be received without salvation being received. I wrote as I did in my review article because I feared that Professor Letham had not expressed himself as clearly on these points as did the Westminster standards. I am, however, fully willing and prepared to admit that the fault may well have been my misunderstanding rather than Professor Letham having failed to communicate things clearly.

Finally, although I agree wholeheartedly that one should benefit from the treasures of the "holy catholic church" (and commended Professor Letham's *Systematic Theology* as an outstanding example of this) and treat with great respect the "tradition" of that church, it may well be that the deepest difference between our approaches to systematic theology is to be found here. The late Professor John Murray believed that systematic theology begins with painstaking exegesis of Scripture in the original languages; such exegesis is to be followed by biblical theology, whereby one traces matters *historically* through the Bible; only then does one systematise things, the chief difference between biblical theology and systematic theology being that whereas the former is organised historically, the organising principle of the latter is to be logical. It is at that point that one consults historical theology, and this includes the great Ecumenical Councils and Creeds, as well as the confessions of different branches of the church. And it is at this point that one may discover that one has gone astray. Equally, however, one may then conclude that others in the past have gone astray.

It is a debatable point whether Calvin differed in any way from the Nicene Creed. Certainly, Professor John Murray believed this to be the case. I know from a personal conversation with Professor Letham that he believes that Murray was mistaken in this judgment. Be that as it may, Murray's point was that unless the church is to ossify in its theology, it is essential for its tradition always to be judged by Scripture. Professor Lethan would, no doubt, agree: he places Scripture above the great Ecumenical Councils and Creeds. But it seems to me that by dismissing new covenant theology as peremptorily – as he does because of his belief that such a theology is out of step with the historic church position (a belief which I believe is not supported by unanimous patristic, medieval, Reformation and post Reformation works) – I fear that he is, *in practice*, in danger of muzzling Scripture rather than being prepared to consider whether large swathes of the historic church were mistaken. This does not mean that we must be forever inventing the wheel and forever re-examining every position we hold. But when a considerable body of evangelical New Testament scholars, who are abreast of both historical and systematic theology, put forward compelling arguments for a position, it ill behoves one of the world's leading systematic theologians in his *magnum opus* to fail to interact with this teaching. This is not to say that that teaching is right and it certainly does not mean that I agree with it; it does mean that there are foemen who were worthy of Professor Letham's steel.

I must conclude. Not, as Professor Letham suggests, by emerging from the waters of the Mediterranean onto a sunbed to read his book, for we are experiencing the wettest and coldest January in living memory. And within the last two weeks before writing these lines the island of Cyprus where I live experienced an earthquake of 6.6 magnitude on the Richter scale. This means, of course, that the theology of the Bible which Professor Letham so wonderfully distils and articulates, while appropriate reading both for the armchair in the evening and for the sunbed on a hot day, is supremely that which needs to be the heartbeat of needy sinners throughout life and that

which, through faith in Jesus Christ, holds us when the Lord either calls or comes for us. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

About the Author

Stephen Clark was a pastor in Wales from 1983 until his retirement in 2020. He was for many years a member of Affinity's Theological Team and Chairman of the Affinity Theological Study Conference. He lectured Systematic Theology at London Seminary until retiring from this work in December 2020, and still lectures Systematic Theology on the Theological Training Course of the Evangelical Movement of Wales, of which course he is Director and Principal. He currently resides in Cyprus.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism
Elijah Hixson and Peter Gurry Eds., InterVarsity Press (2019), 372pp, (£19.54 Amazon)

The reliability of the text of the New Testament is constantly challenged and debated, with sceptics pointing to the many thousands of variants and arguing that we cannot possibly know what the original text said. Consequently, any contemporary apologist needs to be equipped to answer questions about the text and the manuscripts. Even ordinary Bible readers are faced with usually over 500 textual notes in modern translations, and sometimes a lot more. These can raise doubts and questions for the uninformed. Exegetes and preachers need to be able to navigate and assess the arguments for different readings and to explain their decisions to others.

This book is not a how-to book about textual criticism, but it is a very helpful corrective to the huge amount of misinformation that is out there on the whole subject. It is aimed primarily at non-specialist Christians, but it will be helpful for specialists too. Whist aimed at non-specialists it cannot be described as an introduction to the subject. Some knowledge and understanding of the basic issues around textual criticism is assumed.

One classic example critiqued in the book is the comparison between manuscript numbers for the New Testament and those for various classical texts. F.F. Bruce made this argument in his *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* Several high-profile apologists come in for criticism for updating the New Testament numbers and not updating those for the classical texts. Bruce claimed there were just nine or ten copies of Caesar's *Gallic Wars.* Today you should say over 250! Several apologists claim that Homer's *Iliad* is only attested by 643 manuscripts, following Metzger in 1963. Today that would be over 2,500! Bruce claimed about eight manuscripts for Herodotus, and this should be updated to over 100. Bruce also claimed only eight manuscripts for Thucydides which was not a fair comparison even at the time he wrote.

Against these updated figures, the New Testament is still far better attested with around 5,300 Greek manuscripts. We should recognise, however, that 83% of these come from the tenth century or later. Only just over sixty manuscripts cover the entire New Testament. Many others are fragmentary, and the large majority are text-critically unnecessary. This is not to say that the argument has no value, but that it should not be overemphasised.

Another frequently repeated apologetic argument states: "If we compile the 36,289 quotations by the early church fathers of the second to fourth centuries, we can reconstruct the entire New Testament minus 11 verses." The only problem is that it is entirely false. Sadly, it was an Islamic apologetic organisation that took the time to investigate the origins of this myth and to expose how false it is.[1] In a very best-case scenario, perhaps 54% of the New Testament could be reconstructed from the church fathers, but it is often very difficult to assess what is or is not a direct quotation as opposed to citing the sense of the passage, and sometimes conflating several passages. Christians should avoid repeating false claims which can easily be exposed in the internet age.

[1] (2007), 'Sir David Dalrymple (Lord Hailes), the Patristic Citations of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers and the Search for Eleven Missing Verses of the New Testament' (Islamic Awareness).
https://www.islamic-awareness.org/bible/text/citations

There are several misconceptions around the number of variants in the New Testament. Estimates vary widely. A detailed study of all the variants in Philemon found 3.53 non-spelling variants per word. A similar study for John 18 found 3.86 variants per word, and another for Jude found 3.67 variants per word. Extrapolating these statistics across the entire New Testament, which consists of 138,020 words, would mean that there are around 500,000 variants in our Greek manuscripts. This does not include spelling variants, or variants from patristic citations or early translations. Bart Ehrman is quite correct to say that there are more variants among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.

One misconception about this is that these are counted by adding up how many manuscripts attest to each variant. Some apologists have claimed that if one variant is attested in 4,000 manuscripts then this counts as 4,000 variants. This claim goes back to B.B. Warfield and continues to be repeated today, but it is just not true. That would count as one variant.

For John 18 there are 3,508 variants across 1,659 manuscripts in a text of around 800 words. This works out at an average of one distinct variant per 434 words copied, which is not a bad level of copying accuracy. 1,360 of these variants can be ruled out as nonsensical, but that still leaves a lot of variants to assess. Compare this with NA^{28} which includes 154 variants in John 18, and UBS^{4} which includes just ten. Top commentators might discuss a handful of variants in this chapter. But, where the rubber hits the road in actual use, none of the modern English translations notes a single variant in this chapter - not even the richly footnoted NET. The point is that the vast majority of variants are just not worth looking at.

In total UBS^{4} notes variants affecting over 1,500 words in the New Testament out of a total of 138,020, or around 1 per cent. Most of these do not affect meaning significantly, but some do. Let's not forget the well-known disputed pericope about the woman caught in adultery and the ending of Mark as the most significant examples. There are others too, but it remains correct to say that no foundational doctrine or ethical practice depends on a disputed text.

This is an edited book with fifteen chapters written by upcoming scholars in the field, each addressing different issues relevant to textual criticism. Many other popular myths are addressed, including myths about the dating of manuscripts, myths about copyists and transmission, myths about orthodox corruption, and myths about canon. I hope that the examples I have given you above give you a flavour of the content. Included is a bibliography and five indices as well as a foreword by Professor Daniel Wallace.

If you are at all interested in textual criticism, then this book is highly recommended. If you are an apologist who wants to make sure you have your facts right, then this book is required reading in my view. Pastors and theologians who want to update their understanding of textual criticism would benefit too. A very helpful, and sadly much needed corrective to the many myths and mistakes made by well-known authors in this area.

Tim Dieppe
Head of Public Policy, Christian Concern

The Book of Job and the Mission of God: A Missional Reading
Tim J. Davy, Foreword by J. Gordon McConville, Pickwick Publications, 2020, 239pp, £25.00 pb (Amazon)

Tim Davy (PhD, University of Gloucestershire) is the Vice Principal and Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Mission at Redcliffe College in Gloucester, England, where he serves as co-director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Mission. Davy's first published book is a revised version of his PhD thesis completed under the supervision of Dr J. Gordon McConville, who penned a foreword to this significant study on the intersection between missional theology and biblical theology in the book of Job.

Wisdom literature generally – and Job specifically – presents unique challenges to biblical theologians. Davy appropriately asks, "How can a book like Job be said to 'fit into' the grand narrative of the Bible?" (5) Directly addressing the challenge, Davy presents "a reading of Job in the light of the missional nature of the Bible" (1) that he hopes will help to situate this narrative of human suffering and divine justice in relation to the overarching message of Scripture. In so doing, he provides a helpful review of the limited extant scholarship on mission and Job; explores missional concerns in connection to Job's prominent themes of unattributed suffering, social justice, and divine truth; and applies a missional hermeneutic to passages of Job as something of an exegetical case study. In this review, I will evaluate Davy's proposal for how Job relates to Scripture's mainline narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Davy's central argument for understanding Job's relation to the rest of Scripture is "that the importance of Job in this regard is not primarily in how Job fits into the storyline but in how the book stands apart from, and speaks into it" (17; see also 55, 60, 66, 85, 93, 222f). Indeed, Davy contends from Job's spatial-temporal setting apart from the national history and territory of Israel "that the author of Job is not concerned with connecting his story to Israel's storyline" (71). Rather than drawing an explicit connection to God's redemptive dealings with Israel as a chosen people, "the author of Job employs the particularities of the book's setting to universalise themes, thereby allowing the book of Job to speak 'to and for all humanity,' which I would argue is an essential element of our participation in the mission of God" (94f). How Davy conceives of the book of Job as both addressing and expressing universal humanity ties into his characterisation of Job himself as the book's protagonist.

Davy develops the universal characterisation of Job in chapter four, "The Universalizing Impulse in the Book of Job" (94-129) to support his missional reading of the book. He does so first by presenting "The Extent and Significance of the Non-Israelite Theme in the Book of Job" (96-117), and second by considering "Other Universalizing Elements of the Prologue" (118-129), including the book's archaic setting, its literary artistry, and the function of the accuser's taunt in Job 1:9b. His examination of the textual material under these headings is careful, well-reasoned and compelling at many points. For example, Davy amasses and organises relevant biblical data to argue convincingly for a tight association between the land of Uz and the land of Edom (97-101). In discussing the provenance of Job himself, Davy approvingly presents an argument in favour of an Edomite Job while nonetheless concluding that "the ambiguity of Job's provenance" (106) is a much more significant feature of the book. Davy's nuanced evaluation of the material guides his readers to the true (universalising) significance of the ambiguous setting and identities of Job and his friends.

In service to his missional exploration of Job's universalising theme, Davy characterises Job himself as "an 'everyman' figure" in that "although he suffers in a unique and specific manner, he is portrayed as doing so in a way that represents humanity and the vexing and universal problem of unattributed suffering" (106). Elsewhere, Davy rephrases this thought and applies a quotation from the Romantic period French poet Alphonse de Lamartine; "despite the very particularities of his situation, Job becomes a personification of the human dilemma when faced with suffering: 'Job is no longer man; he is humanity!'" (106) However, this missionally motivated characterisation of Job is problematic for two reasons.

First, casting Job in an everyman role is an inaccurate and anachronistic characterisation from a literary standpoint. The character Everyman originated in medieval morality plays in which Everyman himself was a paragon of wretched humanity in need of spiritual redemption and moral reformation. In modern literature and storytelling, the everyman character recurs less as a paradigmatic scoundrel and more as "an ordinary bloke" with whom you and I could easily relate. God's spoken characterisation of Job is exactly opposite that of the medieval Everyman, and neither does it match up with the modern variant. Davy recognises this to be the case by observing that God Himself describes Job in 1:8 and 2:3 as "an idealized wisdom figure… There really is no-one on earth like Job" (124). Furthermore, only three other individual men in Old Testament Scripture are referred to by God as "My servant" (Abram/Abraham in Gen. 18:17 and 26:24; Moses in Num. 12:7 and Josh. 1:2; and David in Ps. 89:20 and Ezek. 37:24), and Job is listed in Ezek. 14:14 alongside Noah and Daniel as especially righteous intercessors before God. In the New Testament, James makes special mention of Job for his remarkable perseverance and blessedness (Jas. 5:11). Job simply does not fit into the everyman role, conceived either as a medieval archetype or as a modern trope.

Second, Davy argues against himself when he puts forward the supposed universalising function of characterising Job as an everyman type. Tying the book's universalising impulse to Job's supposed everyman characterisation undercuts the force of Davy's connection between "the motif of hyperbole in the Prologue in relation to Job's characterisation and circumstances" (123) and Job's place as a representative man. As Davy rightly points out:

> *"Job's initial character and circumstances are expressed most of all by hyperbole, which is then matched by descriptions of the breadth and depth of losses and grief he endures. Job is a man of extremes, and so, functions as a paradigm for everyone in between, providing the most effective 'control' experiment for probing the nature of true piety."* (124)

Davy continues in a similar vein, "the depth and breadth of [Job's] pain is so all-encompassing that, to some degree, he embodies a totality of human suffering and, so, makes him a paradigm in this way as well" (124). In these ways – and not as a supposed everyman character – Job functions as a universal and sympathetic representative for suffering mankind before a just and all-powerful God. These are profound insights for consideration of God's servant Job, his righteousness, his perseverance, and his humanity. It is not Job's common character, but rather his extraordinary suffering in light of uncommon and exemplary righteousness, that makes him relatable.

Notwithstanding the faults associated with reading Job as an everyman character, Davy succeeds in arguing for Job as a representative or paradigmatic sufferer. When the righteousness of Job is juxtaposed to the suffering of Job, what man could seek refuge in his own righteousness to cope with the suffering that is the common lot of mankind? Refuge is to be found elsewhere. Indeed, Job points

the way to the living Redeemer whom he confesses as his own in 19:25ff. Insofar as Davy is correct to conclude that Job stands without but speaks into (and thus, echoes within) the Bible's redemptive-historical narrative, it is Job's testimony regarding his Redeemer that engages with the mainline storyline of Scripture. Through a sustained interrogation of God's relationship to his image-bearers (idealised in and represented by Job himself), the book of Job vindicates God and the way of wisdom that he demands, endorses, and blesses through the course of redemptive history.

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Freedom from Fatalism: Samuel Rutherford's (1600-1661) Doctrine of Divine Providence
Robert C. Sturdy, V&R, 2021, 357pp, £100 (Blackwell)

Samuel Rutherford's name is known to many from his unforgettable letters and sermons. Many too are aware of Rutherford's important role as a commissioner of the Church of Scotland at the Westminster Assembly between 1643-1647, debating with antinomians and independents. But even readers of this journal may be less familiar with the works that made Rutherford's name across Europe, and which led to the celebrated Dutch theologian Gisbertus Voetius attempting three times to bring Rutherford to the continent (71). During his lifetime, Rutherford's European-wide reputation rested on two large Latin treaties on divine providence (a third was published in the Netherlands shortly after his death). The great blessing of this well-organised and clearly-written volume is that in it Robert Sturdy has provided English speakers with accessible overviews of Rutherford's doctrines of God and divine providence, and his answer to the thorny question of the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

In doing so, Sturdy is consciously participating in the recent scholarly trend that seeks to tap into the scholastic expressions of post-Reformation Reformed theology in a more "sympathetic" and "patient" manner than previous generations (23, 25). As the title of the volume hints, Sturdy is particularly working within the general approach of the Dutch "Classic Reformed Theology" research group which was responsible for the influential collection *Reformed Thought on Freedom* (2010), which has received critical engagement from Paul Helm, and, more sympathetically, from Richard Muller. Grounded as it is in textual and contextual study, Sturdy's book offers a useful contribution to these ongoing and important debates.

In the first overview chapter on Rutherford's life, Sturdy gives special attention to examining Rutherford's education at Edinburgh. He rightly notes that although on paper the curriculum at Edinburgh remained as it had been created under the influence of the heavily Ramist Andrew Melville and Robert Rollock, there is little evidence of Ramism in Rutherford's writings, and Rutherford should be seen as part of a broader move in British universities at this time away from Ramism and back to medieval scholasticism (44). Sturdy also looks at the one surviving published work of Rutherford's theological teacher, Andrew Ramsay, a sermon preached at the reception of a former Jesuit into the Church of Scotland, and uses it to point out the "self-conscious Catholic nature of seventeenth-century Scottish Reformed theology" (53). We should note, however, that while Rutherford was certainly adept at drawing on a very wide range of sources from the wider tradition, Rutherford himself disclaimed the label of "Reformed catholic".

After the overview of Rutherford's life and education, Sturdy offers four chapters on Rutherford's doctrine of God's being, knowledge, will and power. These provide the essential foundation for the doctrine of providence proper. Sturdy very effectively shows how Rutherford was concerned at every turn to maintain the Lord's absolute independence in the face of some very sophisticated theological efforts to resolve the question of God's sovereignty and human freedom that, in Rutherford's view, ended up undermining both divine and human freedom. The most obvious of these was the Jesuit Luis de Molina's doctrine of God's "middle knowledge", which underlay Arminius' views of divine grace. To put it very roughly, on this view, God acted something like a computer does today, running in eternity a vast range of alternative scenarios and only then selecting from this range of possible futures those he would choose to actualise. To give an example,

on the middle knowledge view, God necessarily knows prior to his decree that "if the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon were to see Jesus' miracles then they would repent". God's sovereign decree is thus limited to God's choice of whether he will in fact allow the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon to see Jesus's miracles, in the event choosing not to (Matt. 11.21). While this might seem like a reasonable way to reconcile divine sovereignty and human freedom (or at least it did to many within the Reformed tradition in the seventeenth century), Rutherford thought that it made God subject to a kind of fatal necessity. It made God no longer the sole and absolute cause of all things but conditioned by some things.

Sturdy shows that the cornerstone of Rutherford's defence of God's independence was the doctrine of divine simplicity, the teaching that the Lord is "one", without body, parts or passions. For example, Aristotle's most fundamental logical and metaphysical principle is the principle of non-contradiction, which holds that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not be (at the same time and in the same way, cf. *Metaphysics*, book 4, ch. 4). Responding to Jesuit ideas, Rutherford argued even the principle of non-contradiction is not something external to God, or to which God is subject. Rather, the principle is itself grounded in a deeper principle: 'the same is the same' (*idem est idem*). And this principle is itself grounded on perhaps the most basic truth of all, the simple truth of God's perfect simplicity, that God is what he is, as revealed in Ex. 3:14 (82, 111, 133). "Hence the simplicity of God is the ultimately the explanation for a logically coherent universe as we experience it" (133).

The same idea can be reached from a different angle. What determines what God creates? Rutherford held to an idea found influentially in Aquinas, but older than him, called the doctrine of divine ideas. This says that the things which God creates (cats, dogs, mice, men), represent the variety of different ways in which God's infinite essence can be imitated by finite creatures. The divine ideas thus form a palate of possibilities from which God selects what to create, including things that God does not in fact create (unicorns). As Rutherford picked up this doctrine, and its use among Jesuit and Arminian theologians, he was wary of giving the impression that the divine ideas in some way conditioned or limited God. As Rutherford explained things, the number of these divine ideas is essentially infinite, being only limited by the principle of non-contradiction. The divine ideas are all the *distinct* ways in which the divine essence can be imitated in finite beings, without contradiction. If we recall that for Rutherford the principle of non-contradiction is grounded in divine simplicity, we can say that the principle of difference is ultimately grounded in God's own personal unity and is unimaginable without him. This means that it is not so much that God sees various possibilities with a certain degree of distinct existence prior to his choice, as in the middle knowledge model. Rather, "God only knows possibility and actuality as radically dependent upon himself" (135). One way of expressing what Rutherford was driving at is to say with the late medieval defender of God's grace, Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, that "things are impossible *because* God cannot do them", rather than "things are impossible *therefore* God cannot do them". While the difference may seem subtle, in the first statement God remains the cause of things, whereas the second formulation makes "things" the measure of what God can or cannot do (111, 179). Sturdy shows how such reflections underwrote Rutherford's responses to the issues of God's foreknowledge and the claims of Arminianism.

Not all of Sturdy's book is quite this abstract - indeed one of the strengths of the volume is the way he brings in more poetic statements about God's "omnipotence" from Rutherford's letters and sermons to highlight the way this thinking way linked closely with Rutherford's piety. Unfortunately,

space prevents us from engaging here with Sturdy's final two chapters, on the relation between God's will and human will, suffice it to say that in Sturdy's view, Rutherford does not fit neatly into any of the current labels of "determinism", "compatibilism" or "libertarianism". Rutherford described his own position as one of "subordination of powers". God has dominion over his creatures' affairs, but not in a binding or restraining way. The creaturely will does truly have – and must have – dominion over its own acts, otherwise these would be acts of *nature*, not *will*, but this does not exclude its dominion being established by a superior power (204-5). While debate over the exact nature of Reformed orthodox views of freedom and divine sovereignty will continue, Sturdy has offered some evidence suggesting that the views of the Dutch school are not to be dismissed lightly. While Sturdy allowed this reviewer to press more deeply into the way God preserves the freedom of the will, even while determining it to a particular choice, as the author acknowledges, in the end, this remains mysterious.

Overall the author is to be commended for an exceptionally clear and accessible exposition of Samuel Rutherford's highly technical but deeply pious doctrine of divine providence – teaching that was greatly prized in its own day, and which deserves greater attention in our own.

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The Last, the Lost and the Least: Understanding Poverty in the UK and the Responsibility of the Local Church
Mez McConnell, Evangelical Press, 2021. 544pp, £15.82 pp (Amazon)

It takes Mez McConnell nearly 480 pages in his magnum opus, *The Last, the Lost and the Least* before he quotes the famous Scottish preacher and social philanthropist Dr Thomas Guthrie (1803-1873). For much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Guthrie, and much of what he stood for has been forgotten by the Free Church of Scotland and the wider evangelical community in the UK. Aggressive church planting, schools for young offenders, the parish or parochial system of outreach, systematic Deaconate visitation and even Saturday night concerts to keep people from the Gin Palaces, is a world away from the church in Scotland today. Guthrie and his contemporaries saw no conflict between preaching the gospel *and* loving the poor. Mez McConnell, Pastor of Niddrie Community Church, and founder of 20schemes, is about half the size of Thomas Guthrie but has just as much vision for the poor of Scotland. He is a straight talker and an even more straightforward writer. The church in Scotland owes him a huge debt in calling the church to action through this book, much in the way that Guthrie did two centuries ago.

McConnell and the team he has assembled is an inspirational example of what can be achieved with passion and vision, and he has injected life into the work of church planting in housing schemes in Scotland. In 2007, with a big vision, 20schemes was born. Could 20 churches be planted in Scotland's poorest housing schemes? Well, today they are well on their way to that target. They are also supporting many churches in England, and, through *Church in Hard Places*, they are supporting many churches worldwide. So why the need for a book? McConnell explains: "For a God so obsessed with righteousness and justice for the poor, I am amazed at just how few men and women He is calling to the task. Maybe, he has changed His mind and now just wants us to focus on students or the more upmarket on our societies" (468). McConnell seeks to call the church back to its mission of preaching good news to the poor, planting churches and transforming the often-forgotten housing schemes of Scotland through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first part of the book seeks to define and analyse poverty. Poverty is a notoriously complex and thorny issue, but McConnell systematically analyses the many different aspects of poverty. The book uses some excellent data gathered over several years and is available on the 20schemes website with a special QR code that comes with the book. The simple reality is that even if everyone had equality of opportunity, which we don't, many are starting life with huge disadvantages. As McConnell rightly points out, nothing exposed the huge class divisions in our society more than the lockdown of 2020-21. As he says: "We share the same island. We speak the same language. And yet we inhabit, socialise and work within entirely different worlds" (141).

While much of the analysis is interesting, the "Spotlight" sections are perhaps the most compelling and moving part of the book. The stories and experiences of those growing up in housing schemes give the book colour and depth. When I initially flicked through the book and realised its size, I thought I would probably skip through the "Spotlight" sections, I'm so glad I didn't. Ian, a Pastor from Middlesborough says: "All I can say is this: Your class isn't about where you live. It's an attitude or a belief. It is more about where your head is than where your home is" (117). The accounts of lived experience bring out not just the negatives but also the powerful sense of community in traditionally working-class areas. Rachel, a young woman working for a church on a

housing scheme says "…nobody said anything, but we knew that if they were at our house for tea, then their mum was struggling" (120). She talks about the battle for survival and how income takes priority over further education: "It's hard to foster ambition for the future when you're just trying to survive hand to mouth each week" (121).

In the second section of the book, McConnell does a deep dive into "The Bible, Poverty and Helping the Poor". While this section is only 20 pages, McConnell takes a wide survey of Old and New Testament teaching and makes a compelling case for the church to prioritise the poor: "He [God] will not for stand oppression or indifference when it comes to the least, the last and the lost" (231). McConnell makes the point that the Bible's reasons for poverty are many and varied and therefore the way we respond must be careful and thought through. So often the church responds to crisis in a knee jerk manner with little thought for the long term good of the disadvantaged. If a person is in poverty due to their sin and reckless behaviour, our response may well endorse and compound their behaviour. While this short section is helpful, I thought it was very brief and would have liked to have read a longer analysis of the theology of poverty and the imperative to respond.

In the third section of the book, McConnell seeks to analyse the fault lines in British evangelicalism. He returns to the theme of exposing the inadequacy of mercy ministry across the UK. At this point, I should probably say I have a vested interest in this debate. After 11 years working for local authorities, I have worked for two major Christian charities operating in and around Edinburgh for the last 16 years. McConnell describes most mercy ministries as a "slow death to the soul". He argues that so much of the charity offered to those in poverty is patronising and far from solving poverty, often compounds it. So often Christian charities merely respond to symptoms and have no long-term vision for discipleship, church planting or the development of indigenous leadership. McConnell helpfully references Darren McGarvey's bestselling book *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain Underclass* which brilliantly analyses the left-leaning, liberal-dominated poverty industry in Scotland.

McConnell's analysis, that there are many patronising projects often set up by well-meaning but slightly naïve Christians where there is little discernible pathway to a better life never mind Biblical discipleship, is no doubt true. Some people are driven by a "middle-class guilt complex" as the drive for so many projects that neither help nor empower the poor: "In fact I would argue that much of what we do for the poor is to salve middle-class guilt complexes, rather than being something that is well thought out, biblically-based and has a clear long term strategy for helping people to move forward with their lives" (243). I do, however, think that McConnell possibly throws the baby out with the bathwater in seeking to make his point. In my own experience, certainly in the context of Scotland, many mercy ministries are careful to avoid dependency and genuinely seek to take a long-term approach. I heard recently of the senior management team of a large Christian charity who were away on a strategy retreat to study the lessons of the book *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help.* They want to work in partnership with the local church, partner with those they are serving and make a long-term impact in poorer areas. I'm not aware of many local foodbanks that would give out food without limit. Most limit their donations and seek evidence of how people are seeking to address their poverty. My own charity seeks to support families with volunteers from local churches. Far from disempowering churches, we seek to provide the training and support necessary for local churches to reach out to families in crisis. We act as a bridge for the local church to reach the last, the lost and the least.

To be fair to McConnell, he is not asking for mercy ministries to be stopped so much as radically redesigned. As he says: "I am not calling for an end to mercy ministry. I am calling for them to be made better. I am calling for them to be more reciprocal, less one-sided, and more of a stepping stone on the road to serious Christian discipleship within a local church. My contention is that generous justice is not enough on its own" (265). I couldn't agree more. This is a timely call for all of us to review what we are doing and ask ourselves if what we are doing is, in the long term, helping or hurting the poor.

My only slight caveat concerning the soup kitchens that McConnell characterises as a "slow death to the soul" is that many similar projects are keeping people alive and are the stepping stone to other help. I have visited (and developed) many projects over the last 27 years where basic care was linked to debt advice, housing support, health care, employment support, addiction help and perhaps most importantly of all, relationships with Christians who can talk to them about their deeper need. As we see with the Good Samaritan, loving our neighbour does not always lead to conversion or discipleship. Sometimes people need to be picked up in all their needs and pain and loved, even if, at that point, they don't see their need for Christ. There is a place for mercy ministries that work in partnership with the poor and who strengthen and support the work of the local church.

The final section of the book plots the journey to revitalisation and transformation amongst the last, the lost and the least. McConnell helpfully argues that the local church not only matters but is the only long-term solution to the poverty, crime and family breakdown in so many poorer communities: "Who will be the light to our poor communities if it is not the local churches, holding out the gospel and passing on the baton? We need flaming bonfires of gospel light burning brightly in the darkness of our schemes and housing estates" (349). There is a particularly good chapter on discipleship which turns so much of the modern Christian thinking on discipleship on its head. As he says, "In Christian discipleship, we must steel our hearts for disappointment, but we must not have steely hearts" (406). McConnell argues for proper expository preaching to the poor rather than the gimmicks they are so often fed. The journey of discipleship can be hard and disappointing, but this is the call of the gospel.

In my experience, love for the poor is fundamentally a theological issue and it takes time and patience to win people over. Fundamentally, the book is not intended to alienate but to start a dialogue. As he says in his conclusion: "My intention in writing this book has not been to offend, but to generate fruitful discussion" (449). It has certainly succeeded in doing that. I found it stimulating, challenging and if I'm honest, quite unsettling.

Thomas Guthrie's lonely statue stands in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, unknown and unrecognised by a society that has long since lost its Christian heritage. The statue beautifully reminds passers-by of true Christianity. Guthrie stands resplendent with a Bible in one hand and his arm around a "ragged" child on the other. He embodies the Christian gospel: truth and love. *The Last, the Lost, and the Least* is a call for the church to return to its Biblical roots and reverse 50 years of flight from the most deprived areas of the UK. McConnell doesn't pull any punches, the situation is desperate, the harvest is great, and the labourers are few. Contrary to what many people believe, there is a real spiritual hunger on housing schemes and the need for gospel-centred healthy churches has never been greater. Let's step up to the huge challenge of this book: "Come and migrate to the spiritual wastelands of the UK and work long hours, in difficult circumstances, with some

beautiful glimpses of gospel light, with many discouragements and little financial reward. And then die here. Nameless and forgotten by all but Him who we serve: King Jesus" (479).

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