

# Reviews



**PROPHET AND TEACHER: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL JESUS**, by William R. Herzog II. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. Pp. 243. \$24.95 (paper).

In this creative and informative volume, William R. Herzog II combines new scholarly reflections with elements from his previous publications to provide a helpful introduction to the study of the historical Jesus. Whereas his previous historical Jesus books (*Parables as Subversive Speech* [1994] and *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God* [2000]) have focused on specific aspects of the life and public activity of Jesus, this volume provides a more general introduction to issues in historical-Jesus studies. At the outset of his work Herzog writes, “This work places special emphases on the political, economic, and social aspects of Jesus’ public activity, and it develops Jesus’ theology and ethics as a response to the context of his activity in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea” (x). Herzog does not specify the intended audience of his work but a close reading shows that it is best suited for a moderately educated reader.

The first two chapters serve as an overview of foundational issues in the study of the historical Jesus. In chapter one, Herzog, following the lead of E. P. Sanders, lays out thirteen “indisputable facts about the historical Jesus” (2–3). From there he provides the four general approaches to the historical Jesus that will inform the remainder of his discussion: (1) Jesus as prophet; (2) Jesus as teacher/rabbi; (3) Jesus as traditional healer and exorcist; and (4) Jesus as reputational leader (12). These roles are reintroduced

and defined in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

In chapter two Herzog is concerned with the methods necessary for a responsible study of the historical Jesus. He engages in form-critical and source-critical discussions where the parables are concerned, and also introduces the valid criteria of authenticity as he sees them. In the process of discussing the criteria of authenticity he also critiques the various criteria that have been set forth by other scholars. Herzog concludes the chapter by iterating that certainty in historical inquiry is not available and that the purpose of his work is to stimulate discussion and fresh thinking on the issues. This shows that he is not interested in having the last word in the discussion as much as causing fruitful dialogue—a laudable aim in light of the general tenor of many current works on the historical Jesus.

In chapter three, Herzog defines Palestine as an “advanced agrarian society” that is characterized by a “great divide between the haves and have-nots” (50). According to this model the few who held power relied upon certain levels of social stratification to keep them in power, with the effect that the vast majority of the population was left destitute. In addition, the people were burdened by taxes from the elite, and socially oppressed in their inability to advance. It is against this backdrop, argues Herzog, that we must understand Jesus’ use of parables as politically subversive speech.

Chapters four through six develop the picture of Jesus as teacher and prophet. The discussion in these chapters revolves around the model for Jesus’ parables and the circumstances under which Jesus could

have risen to the level of a reputational leader and teacher of Torah. According to Herzog, the model of honor challenge and riposte greatly informs the modern understanding of Jesus' style of public debate. In addition, Jesus used a method of emphasizing the meaning of Torah for his present economy. This often contrasted with the reading embraced by the religious elite. Thus, Jesus reinterpreted Torah in light of his circumstances and those of his listeners in a way that could be considered an attack on the tradition accepted by those in power.

Since the interpretation of Torah and the life of the temple were intimately connected, Herzog devotes chapter seven to an examination of how Jesus' assailing of the religious elite and their interpretation of Torah equated to an assailing of the temple cult. This is a helpful segue to chapter eight, where Herzog outlines the differences between the "Great Tradition," which refers to the worldview held by the rulers, with the "Little Tradition," which refers to the worldview of the oppressed. Both of these worldviews ultimately shaped each group's interpretation of Torah. Needless to say, these two worldviews came into sharp contrast with one another.

Chapter nine is provocatively entitled, "The Village as Shadow Society and Alternate Moral Universe." Here the author develops the idea of a subculture where Jesus could have arisen with an authoritative voice, speaking to the masses about the oppression they were undergoing. The members of this "alternate moral universe" were in a position to embrace Jesus' interpretation of Torah and his proclamation of God's liberation.

The book ends with a focus on what Herzog calls Jesus' "show trial in Jerusalem." Here he not only precludes anti-Jewish readings of the Gospels but also points to the one indisputable fact about Jesus with which nearly every Jesus scholar agrees: Jesus was executed as a criminal by a small band of ruling elites. He very appropriately concludes the book by pointing out the inherent ambiguities in studying documents that blend faith and history. Such a conclu-

sion is further evidence of Herzog's desire to raise questions and encourage genuine dialogue about the historical Jesus.

Many of the insights in this volume are frankly quite unexpected. After an examination of Herzog's work, one may not agree with all of his assumptions or conclusions, but his scholarship and attention to details that are not generally covered by Jesus scholars are noteworthy. In the end, because of its complex combining of social-scientific approaches with other methodological approaches to the study of the New Testament, this volume would likely not be appropriate as the primary introductory text for the college student or seminarian. However, this book will prove useful in a number of venues and does deserve to be among the primary texts for advanced reading on historical-Jesus studies.

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**ENCOUNTERS WITH BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**, by John J. Collins. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. Pp. 243. \$22.00 (paper).

This book provides readers with easy access to fifteen contributions made by one of the leading Old Testament scholars of our day. In this collection of material published in a wide variety of places, spanning the last three decades, John Collins addresses issues in an equally diverse set of topics and concerns. The book's structure consists of five parts: "Theoretical Issues," "Topics in the Pentateuch," "Wisdom and Biblical Theology," "Apocalyptic Literature," and "Christian Adaptations of Jewish Traditions." Within these sections, topics include: biblical theology, a history of Israelite religion, the politics of biblical interpretation, ethics and the sacrifice of Isaac, the Exodus tradition, the biblical vision of the common good, natural theology in the Bible, wisdom and the Yahwistic vision, Hellenistic Judaism and natural theology, different versions of apocalyptic writings, Daniel in contem-

porary American biblical interpretation, a survey of apocalypticism's key features, Jesus and messianism in Israel, and Jewish monotheism and Christian theology. The scope of these essays provides entry points into much of the theology of the Old Testament (although the prophets are noticeably missing) and its implications for the construction of theology by Christians in the present. As in his other writings, Collins maintains his commitment to the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation throughout these analyses, and demonstrates the usefulness of this approach for assessing biblical texts and their theological significance.

Several essays are rather technical and specific in their analyses. This is especially true for those dealing with theoretical issues and topics such as natural theology. However, many essays are clearly written with a more general audience instead of scholarly academic readers of the Bible in mind. Thus, the three essays on apocalyptic topics are informative and accessible to the nonspecialist. Also, the essay entitled "The Biblical Vision of the Common Good" provides an excellent reflection on both what the Bible articulates as such a thing and its importance for contemporary social ethics. Further, the final two essays dealing with the relationship between the Christian traditions and early Jewish traditions present complex ideas in concise and helpful terms. The benefit of these two essays, in particular, is to lay out contexts for understanding Jesus in his time: the diverse beliefs about messianic expectation during that era and the qualifications to strict monotheism already present in Jewish traditions at the time of Jesus that would allow the claims for Jesus' preexistence to have been acceptable in such an environment. The implications of these comparative discussions greatly influence the way in which responses to Jesus within the Gospels may be understood in a more accurate and complete historical setting by modern readers of the Bible.

In light of the scope and depth of the essays, the book does remain somewhat uneven in its content. While all of the essays

clearly communicate their subject matter, the subject matter itself may not be of interest to many readers coming to the book with questions about "theology." That is, the book is not a systematic theological approach to the Bible (nor does it claim to be), but it is a selective collection of writings that promote understanding the historical context of the theological claims contained within the Bible in order to construct theological statements that may be relevant to contemporary theological concerns.

In conclusion, this book is recommended especially for those who desire a strong foundation in the historical contexts that produced the theology contained within the Bible. In addition, this collection of essays allows one of the premiere scholars of our own day to speak again to a broad audience. The range of these essays is consistent with his other writings, and this collection provides an introduction for readers into his valuable contributions to the study of the Bible, especially the Old Testament and background for the New Testament. In this book, Collins demonstrates the importance of the historical-critical method for "doing theology" in a manner that is sensitive to ancient meanings of theological issues in the Bible and to their implications for the present day.

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**IMAGINING REDEMPTION**, by David H. Kelsey. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. Pp. x and 108. \$14.95 (paper).

In this lucid work of pastoral and systematic theology, Kelsey contributes to our understanding of the Christian doctrine of redemption by sketching an awful sequence of events that befell an eight-year-old named Sam and his family, and exploring what it might mean to affirm that, in Jesus, God redeems such persons and events. Kelsey begins his exploration at the inter-

section between communities of Christian faith and the larger cultures within which they are situated, because he recognizes that our understanding of redemption is shaped by our relation to these mutually informing contexts. He illustrates the intersection between these contexts by noting that in colloquial English the terms *redeem*, *redeeming*, and *redemption* are used in one of three broad ways to mean: “(1) making up for a bad performance, (2) redeeming from alien control, and (3) making good on a promise,” and then showing that Christian usage “metaphorically extends” each of these nontheological uses.

Kelsey maintains that Christian uses of these terms are distinguished from other uses by their reference to a temporally extended relation between the trinitarian God who acts redemptively and the concrete events and situations that cry out for redemption. With this distinction in mind, Kelsey suggests the three colloquial uses be extended in such a way that God is said to relate to the world redemptively when God “in some way ‘makes up for’ the world’s bad performances” (17), “frees persons and situations from oppressive powers that bind and distort them” (18), and “actually makes good on a promise God has explicitly made to humankind” (19). In the three chapters comprising the bulk of the book, then, Kelsey looks at each Christian use of the terms *redeem*, *redeeming*, *redemption*, and related words as he seeks an answer to the question, “How should redemption be thought about and imagined?” (2).

In chapter two, Kelsey tells of the immense suffering endured by Sam and his family after Sam contracted the Guillain-Barré Syndrome, and seeks to answer the question of how we might imagine Jesus “making up for” the distortion and loss caused by such horrible events. He describes various encounters with fellow Christians that enabled Sam’s father to cope with the horror, but draws a clear distinction between coping and being redeemed. Redemption, he contends, must mean something more than learning to cope. In terms of “making up for” the

world’s bad performance, he suggests we imagine redemption as Jesus’ promising presence in Sam’s family history, and examines several structural features of promise-making that render it a plausible model for imagining redemption. However, because the model seems to yield “only a *possibility* of redemption...a redemption Sam’s family may—or may not—‘live into,’” Kelsey argues that it must be thought together with the metaphors of “redemption from” and “fulfilling a promise” (40).

If understanding redemption as “making up for” the world’s bad performance draws on biblical references to Jesus’ words and deeds, imagining it in terms of being freed from control by a power concentrates on who Jesus is in his passion. Before developing his model of Jesus as “the fellow sufferer who sets free,” Kelsey considers and rejects as unhelpful to the situation involving Sam and his family models of “evil as punishment,” “perfection through suffering,” and Jesus as the “fellow sufferer who understands” (47). One of the most interesting aspects of this section is Kelsey’s brief discussion of Whitehead’s view of redemption, and his implicit characterization of it as a mere resource for coping. In contrast to this understanding, Kelsey maintains that God’s participation in the suffering and death of Jesus is God’s particular way of loving us, which results in our being liberated from bondage to the past and opened to the future. In his words, “it is just *that* love that can redeem personal identities like Sam’s and his father’s from their distorting bondage to past events, for it is God’s love for them that grounds the worth of their lives” (61).

In the fourth chapter, Kelsey seeks to understand redemption as God’s “making good” on God’s promise to bring eschatological fulfillment. If the other metaphors are subject to the criticism that they portray redemption as a matter of the inner life (a point Kelsey partly contests), the image of God bringing creation to fulfillment clearly depicts redemption as a public event. This use of the term emphasizes the difference the risen Jesus can make for Sam, his father, and others like them. If Jesus embodies the

promise that the eschatological new creation is imminent, his resurrection inaugurates the fulfillment of this promise. The eschaton has not been fully actualized. We live between the times, after Easter and before the general resurrection. "In that time," Kelsey writes, "the grace of the new creation is free. But it is not cheap." With Sam and his family, we live into the new creation "only by passing through full disclosure and judgment of who we are" (82). This does not mean that redemption is conditional. In Kelsey's view, "the grace of new creation breaking into the old...is unconditional" (82). God is at work in us enabling us to will and work for God's good pleasure. Therefore, we work out our salvation with fear and trembling (83).

Through the course of this book, Kelsey has demonstrated the connection between the various aspects of particular concrete situations crying out for redemption and the meaning redemption acquires in relation to them. In demonstrating this connection, he makes a compelling case for the idea that the doctrine of redemption ought not be constructed in abstraction from the concrete situations to which it is related. Moreover, this work serves as a call for the academy to renew its commitment to the communities of faith it serves, and signifies the need to rethink the relation between systematic and practical theology. For these and a host of other reasons, the book should be widely read and discussed.

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**DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: REALITY AND RESISTANCE**, by Larry L. Rasmussen. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005. Pp. 222. \$34.95 (paper).

For a book to be reprinted thirty-some years later (it was first published by Abingdon Press in 1972) requires that some publisher deemed it to possess an enduring message and have significant value. Author Larry Rasmussen states in the "Introduc-

tion to the 2005 Edition" why he believes his work deserves republication: "At the time it was initially published—1972—it was the only book-length treatment of Bonhoeffer's resistance and its theological-ethical grounding. Oddly, it still is!" (8). Rasmussen is held in high esteem within any international short list of Bonhoeffer scholars as well as among Christian ethicists across America. Currently, he is the Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

It is a rather well-known fact that Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died a martyr's death in a Nazi concentration camp for his

complicity in the now famous July 20, 1944 plot on Hitler's life, had been a committed pacifist in his earlier years. Many a Christian, many a theologian, has struggled to understand the reasons why Bonhoeffer transitioned from pacifist to coconspirator. Only those with a superficial understanding of his life and thought could conclude that he "lost" his Christian faith in his later years; more often scholars assume a basic continuity in his Christian faith and theology although his life circumstances changed dramatically. Rasmussen declares in the first few sentences of this book what he understands the relationship of Bonhoeffer's christology, ethics, and resistance to be:

The thesis of this study is that Dietrich Bonhoeffer's resistance activity was his Christology enacted with utter seriousness. Bonhoeffer's resistance was the existential playing out of Christological themes. Changes and shifts in his Christology were at the same time changes and shifts in the character of his resistance. In the other direction, changes in his resistance activity had an impact upon his Christology. What is before us then, is the interaction of Bonhoeffer's Christology, ethics, and resistance. (15)

Rasmussen begins his exposition arguing that Bonhoeffer's view of reality is christological through and through. Borrowing a phrase from Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer, Rasmussen asserts that Jesus Christ establishes an "ontological coherence" of God's reality with the reality of the world (16). Ethics then becomes the realization of the world's true (christological) character. Further, it is argued that Bonhoeffer's ethics is always contextual: "It is contextual because the manifestations of Christ's form in the world are always revealed and apprehended within the context of the concrete, ever-changing dynamic of the historical process" (24). Because the living Christ is at the center of every human relationship, ethics is always "personal-relational."

Rasmussen moves from a discussion of Bonhoeffer's christological foundation of reality to the *Gestalt Christi* (form of Christ)

as shown in Bonhoeffer's writings on ethics. While fragmentary and episodic, Bonhoeffer's ethical reflections use the concepts of responsibility, deputyship, freedom, and acceptance of guilt as ways of describing aspects of conforming to Christ's presence in the world. When moving to the prison letters, further aspects of conformation are offered: maturity, worldliness, autonomy, and life for others.

The second major section of the book spells out the context and character of Bonhoeffer's early pacifism with further textual references showing the transition "from the categorical non-violence of *The Cost of Discipleship* to violence as *ultima ratio* in *Ethics*" (119). Bonhoeffer's understanding of the *necessitas* for tyrannicide as a unique, extraordinary, irrational, and illegal act is spelled out in a chapter entitled, "The Measuring of Tyrannicide." Essentially, Bonhoeffer concluded that "tyrannicide will lead to the diminishing of evil" (139).

Rasmussen often returns to his belief that Bonhoeffer's involvement in the conspiracy to assassinate Adolf Hitler actually shaped much of his ethical reflection; in the responsible actions of those involved in the resistance, Bonhoeffer experienced the "theocratic breadth" of Jesus Christ, through which his understanding becomes more universal and humanistic (41).

One can be led to think, after reading parts one and two, that Rasmussen, like many Bonhoeffer scholars, is so taken up by the words and witness of this twentieth-century martyr that nothing critical will be offered. Yet, in part three, his critique, Rasmussen shows the limitations of Bonhoeffer's methodology for ethics. In short, he claims that Bonhoeffer's approach more closely resembles a *Gesinnungsethik* (an ethic of disposition) than an *Objektivethik* (an ethic of right action). "So in the end Bonhoeffer's ethic...does not answer the difficult question of Christian ethics: how does one judge among conflicting claims to Christian action, all of which assert that they discern and bring to expression Christ's form in the world" (159). Rasmussen regrets that "his [Bonhoeffer's]

portrayals of prescriptive and deliberative modes rule out the aids with which they can supplement relational ethics" (164). He believes that "Bonhoeffer's methodology and understanding of ethics work against answering the test question of Christian ethics: 'How am I, as a Christian, to decide among conflicting claims, all of which contend that they embody the will of God?'" (168).

Before Appendix A and B ("Bonhoeffer, Gandhi and Resistance," and two letters from Bonhoeffer to Reinhold Niebuhr) conclude the book, an excellent "Critique of Resistance" is offered, in which the make-up and the machinery of the military resistance to Hitler is described. Rasmussen does an excellent job diagnosing the types of personalities involved in the resistance as well as the inherent technical deficiencies leading up to the failed plot of July 20, 1944. While clearly respectful of the motives and altruistic actions of the conspirators, the author is constructively critical of what that make-up meant for the machinery needed to successfully carry out a conspiracy. *Di- etrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* has an enduring message and significant value. It is very challenging to read and well worth every invested hour!

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**SHAPING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS**, by Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. Pp. 184. \$24.95 (paper).

A summary of *Shaping the Christian Life* might go something like this: To elevate reason over emotion or emotion over reason is to construct false alternatives. One way to get behind this mistake is to look at religious affections. Unlike emotions, which are about how we feel, religious affections are understood to be about who we are. Twelve of them are isolated: awe, humility, grati-

tude, direction, rightness, well-being, contrition, mutuality and interdependence, obligation, delight, self-sacrificial love, and hope. For the Christian these (1) are related to our senses and directed toward God, (2) are communal, (3) have to do with desire and dependence in Christ, and (4) lead to how we know and do.

In the first half of the book the authors develop what they call a liturgical theological anthropology of the religious affections. This necessitates a discussion of sin both in its inner and outer fragmentation, the incarnation and beauty, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the reordering of the religious affections. In the second half they interpret the meaning of Christian worship in light of this understanding. They propose a model of worship that accounts for other models, but highlights the importance of the religious affections allied to the majesty of God and a corresponding non-groveling humility about humanity. Their ecclesiology assumes a covenant community of memory and hope that is confessional and takes into account unity and diversity. That leads them to conclude that we are formed socially, use language not only to express ideas but to generate our perception of reality, and are also shaped by material acts and the physical world. Christian worship then is seen to evoke, shape, order, express, sustain, and direct our religious affections. It leads not only to an inner sense of wholeness, but the direction to God is always mediated outward toward the good of others.

The ordo of Christian worship is understood as a three-part structure of gathering, abiding, and sending, where abiding encompasses word and Eucharist. Elements from this historic pattern are isolated in relation to the affections. God is seen to work over a lifetime to renew and restore, to purify and enlighten, and to disorient so as to reorient us in a theocentric and social direction. More detail is then given to prayer, the service of the word, and sacraments; a final epilogue concludes with reflections about music. Throughout the book worship is approached with a wholeness that will not allow for agendas, but it is never viewed as an

ingrown activity. Rather, the authors take pains to show how worship relates to the affections, not only in the sense of renewal and purification, but in dying to the false beauties of consumerism, amusement, and nationalism.

It is possible to distill the essence of the book in something like the three previous paragraphs. The hints at its spirit and vantage point remain to be articulated. Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews teach at Memphis Theological Seminary. As Don Saliers says in the foreword, they “place themselves solidly within the Reformed traditions of the Christian faith, drawing especially on the resources found in the Presbyterian (PCUSA) *Book of Common Worship*.” They do not come brashly slashing as Luther might. They come like Calvin, organizing slowly, methodically, and systematically, with three points here and four there, all under thoughtfully chosen headings. This is a small book, only 165 pages of text (182 pages if you include endnotes and the two indices of biblical citations and subjects and names), but it takes a long time to read if you do it carefully. The argument proceeds slowly by repetition. Each piece is built carefully onto what precedes it and then serves to support the next piece.

Not narrowly sectarian, the vision here is ecumenical; but it wisely works from a particular grounding, in this case a Reformed one, open to other insights. Hotz and Mathews acknowledge their indebtedness to Reformed mentors, but not only Reformed ones. H. Richard Niebuhr, James Gustafson, and Jonathon Edwards are there, but so are Friedrich Schleiermacher, Eastern Orthodox themes, and Don Saliers. Though this cluster is overwhelmingly Reformed, its catholic scope is also clear.

The book makes a responsible Reformed contribution to our ecumenical conversations about worship in relation to the Christian life. Getting behind a false overemphasis on either reason or emotion is helpful, as is distinguishing emotions from affections. But there is a deeper layer here. The church, and sometimes specifically the Reformed tradition, has been criticized for

staring at humanity in worship to the exclusion of God, or, if that is avoided, for taking the opposite tack by emphasizing God’s majesty in worship to such an extent that humanity is neglected. This book views the church and the Reformed tradition, rightly understood, as not allowing either distortion. Its authors want to lift up human affections as quite important, but they tie them to the singular importance of God known in Christ. They refuse to let either of these emphases stand without the other one. They also understand that affections are shaped over a lifetime. Given the momentary focus of many current discussions about worship, perhaps that is the simplest and most salutary insight of all.

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**GIVING TO GOD: THE BIBLE’S GOOD NEWS ABOUT LIVING A GENEROUS LIFE**, by Mark Allan Powell. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. Pp. 186. \$13.00 (paper).

Just page through Powell’s book and you will see that this is no ordinary work. Most pages are white, but some are gray, drawing attention to significant quotations from various authorities, to a page of questions at the end of each chapter, or to major subsections of the book. Each chapter is also headed by a Bible verse that undergirds the content that follows. Alongside the text, in bold type, are sub-points that are not to be missed. At the close of the book ample additional resources are listed, as are pages and pages of the many Scripture passages alluded to in the book.

The content, which is divided into two parts and seven chapters, is well worth putting on any congregational library shelf. It is easily readable and might well change the thinking of any serious reader. Unfortunately, this reviewer’s experience may reflect attitudes toward the subject in many parishes. Upon retirement a decade ago, my library was, for the most part, being doled

out to possible recipients. A dozen books on stewardship did not seem appropriate for use by students in third-world seminaries. But some of these had helped me. So why not donate them to the library of our own congregation? What became of them someone else knows and isn't telling. They never were shelved. The shape that Stewardship Sunday takes is thus unaffected by any reading or theological reflection. What a change could be brought about by pastors' and stewardship committees' encounters with this book!

Powell is not interested in gimmicks to raise money or ways to lay guilt-trips on unwilling participants. From the start, he puts the subject in the category of Good News. Why do we give to the church or any charity? Because God's love and generosity inspire us to joyful giving. Yes, congregations have budgets and we need to assume our fair share of the expenses. That takes care of the first step. A second arises from our need to give to God who incidentally owns everything. We are just stewards. And each person spontaneously, joyfully has many opportunities to share some of the 100% that belongs to God. Yes, it needs to be done responsibly so that one retains enough to live modestly. But John Wesley is cited as an example of one who gave away increasing amounts, as he maintained the same standard of living while receiving greater remuneration (168).

As to breakdown of the content, part one convinces readers that they belong to God. Here chapter one describes stewardship as an act of worship, just as it was in ancient Israel. It is a way of giving thanks, of showing love to God who blesses and loves us. Chapter two further elucidates stewardship as an experience of faith. We ought not to delude ourselves into thinking that we are owners. But we are entrusted with much, finally even with the gospel. Christ saves us from sin, death, and hell. Thus we are Christ's people. Trusted by God, we live and serve in trust in return. Finally, in chapter three, stewardship is a spiritual discipline. We use but ought not to serve mammon. Spiritual health is tied to good stewardship. Here, as

in the questions at the end of each section, the author becomes very personal. He tells of an experience early in life that matured him. What do you love more than Jesus? Better get rid of it!

Part two is entitled "Duty and Delight." How are we privileged to use our money for God? People are leery when pastors preach stewardship, so pastors may be reluctant to go there. But four chapters show the way to preach it without appearing greedy. Chapter four, "Faithful Living," puts money into the context of all of life, which belongs to God who gives it. The kingdom of God, the lordship of Christ, puts this into its proper context. How are we to acquire, regard, and manage our resources? The Lord is available to help us do this. Gratitude and trust on our part make it possible to move in this direction. Those who have done this are happy to recommend it. Chapter five, "Faithful Giving," ties in with chapter two. Motives for giving can be: recognition, accumulation of power, appeasing God. Better is giving thanks. Chapter six, "Support and Sacrifice," talks about the two types of giving already alluded to. Some will, no doubt, disagree with the suggested motivation for supporting the budget: assume your fair share. So, pledge but don't put it in the offering plate, since this is not worship. Only free-will offerings belong there. Finally, chapter seven deals with the question: How much? This is the touchiest topic of all. Yet it is voluntary giving that Powell proposes. With budget support your pastor or financial officer can help you. Just share with them your tax return! With step two, a cheerful sacrifice will suffice. The Lord and I can work together on that. I will grow and the Lord will rejoice with me. Let's hope that many readers will do so. This will be good news indeed!

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**THE LANGUAGE OF GOD: A SCIENTIST PRESENTS EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF,**

by Francis S. Collins. New York: Free Press, 2006. Pp. 294. \$26.00 (cloth).

People who are both faithful and thoughtful frequently find themselves pinched between the jaws of competing cultural convictions. On one side compression is applied by science; on the other, by religion. Voices like that of Richard Dawkins make light of religion as so much sentimental nonsense; this argument declares that the only valid worldview is provided by science and that God, faith, and revealed religion are all cop-outs.

The other jaw of the pincer is applied by certain religious fundamentalists. These “defenders of the faith” attack science as dangerous and untrustworthy. Literal interpretations of sacred texts place these people in opposition to evolution and many areas of the biological sciences. The flags of creationism and intelligent design wave over this camp, leading to confusion, antagonism, and even litigation. As a result, many thoughtful believers, pinched by such contradictory dogmatic views, experience a cultural headache that doesn’t seem to go away.

For those who have experienced this pain, Francis Collins provides a thoughtful, if not totally convincing, analgesic. As the head of the Human Genome Project and a man of strong religious faith, Collins is in a position to understand the conflict of science and religion and to address it with some helpful and thought-provoking insights. Collins is convinced that the worldviews of science and religion are not mutually exclusive. Both provide differing but complementary ways of answering the greatest of the world’s questions, and both can co-exist happily within the mind of an intellectually inquisitive person living in the twenty-first century (227).

One part of Collins’s book deals with the great questions of human existence, such as the Big Bang and the formation of our solar system and planet earth. Acknowledging the contribution of Stephen Hawking in *A*

*Brief History of Time*, Collins gives (and affirms) a scientific account of the origins of the universe. He also picks up on Hawking’s metaphysical musing on the possible relation between the triumph of human reason and the mind of God. Collins, however, takes a giant leap from this speculation to an affirmation of his own. For him, the Big Bang cries out for a divine explanation; nature could not have created itself. “Only a supernatural force that is outside of space and time could have done that” (67). For many caught in the pincer, this view will be comforting; for others it might appear to be naive or problematic.

The bulk of Collins’s argument deals with the biological sciences, for here Collins, who works at the cutting edge of DNA research, is most at home. His work in this area places him in the front ranks of the scientific world. In his clear but complex discussion on DNA (100–106), he admits that much has been accomplished in this area, and that a great deal of it challenges a fundamentalist, antievolution frame of mind. As if paying tribute to the doctrine of vocation and call, however, Collins declares that the sequencing of the human genome has been for him an occasion of worship (3). Far from collapsing into the arms of scientific atheism or the grasp of creationist religion, Collins affirms God’s creative and guiding hand at work in science and in the world.

Collins does not let religious conviction cloud his mind about scientific matters; he is acutely aware of the contentions that exist between the theory of evolution and faith in God. In separate chapters he considers the mischief that can occur when science trumps faith and when faith trumps science. The result is the cold comfort of atheism or agnosticism on the one hand and the heated, indefensible positions of creationism and intelligent design on the other.

These chapters pave the way for a position in which he sees science and faith in harmony, a view he calls theistic evolution or BioLogos. The six premises on which this position is derived (200) create, for him, an intellectually satisfying and logically consistent synthesis: that God has chosen evolu-

tion as the mechanism by which the biological enterprise on earth has been constructed. Drawing on the thought of C. S. Lewis, Collins concludes that evolution, as spelled out in the elegance of DNA sequencing, shows us how God operates.

One of the compelling aspects of Collins's narrative is the telling of his own story. He tells how, like C. S. Lewis, he traveled from being an atheist to becoming a believer. He recounts how experiences, like a life-changing stint as a doctor in Nigeria, both challenged and affirmed his faith. Without wanting to proselytize, Collins bears witness to the existence of the moral law and how it points him to God. Not content to rest with some vague form of natural theology, Collins affirms his own belief in Jesus Christ and explains how Christianity has provided for him the ring of eternal truth.

Some readers may find Collins's views at this point less than convincing. Some may

sniff at his building a rickety bridge over the chasm that lies between science and faith. Others may find his views nettlesome, bordering on a kind of universalism. Scientists might call his thinking soft, while religionists might balk at his conviction that evolution is the language of God. In spite of his appealing argument, many will still remain pinched between the competing and seemingly incompatible pressures of godless science and godly belief.

Those looking for a thoughtful and helpful resource, however, will find the material in this book to be of considerable value. Collins is a first-rate scientist who speaks compassionately about religion; and he is a convinced believer who speaks eloquently about science. Well aware of the raging controversies, he speaks calmly about the significant issues of research and evolution as well as the major matters of morality and faith. *The Language of God* concludes with a lengthy appendix in which Collins can-

vasses the landscape of morality and bio-ethical dilemmas: stem cell research and cloning, when life really begins, the genetic basis of homosexuality, manipulation of human intelligence, and genetic enhancement.

In all these areas easy solutions are elusive. Yet here, in all these areas, the controversy between science and religion rages relentlessly. Collins is of the conviction that it is necessary to do the work of science and to affirm the role of faith. He is convinced that we need to confront the dilemmas that face us in these areas, but not as head-squeezing pincers that pinch the life out of

our human efforts. “The need to succeed at these endeavors is just one more compelling reason why the current battles between the scientific and spiritual worldviews need to be resolved—we desperately need both voices to be at the table, and not to be shouting at each other” (272). This book is a calm and often convincing voice in the midst of the storm, a voice that modulates the shouting and offers counsel and hope.

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